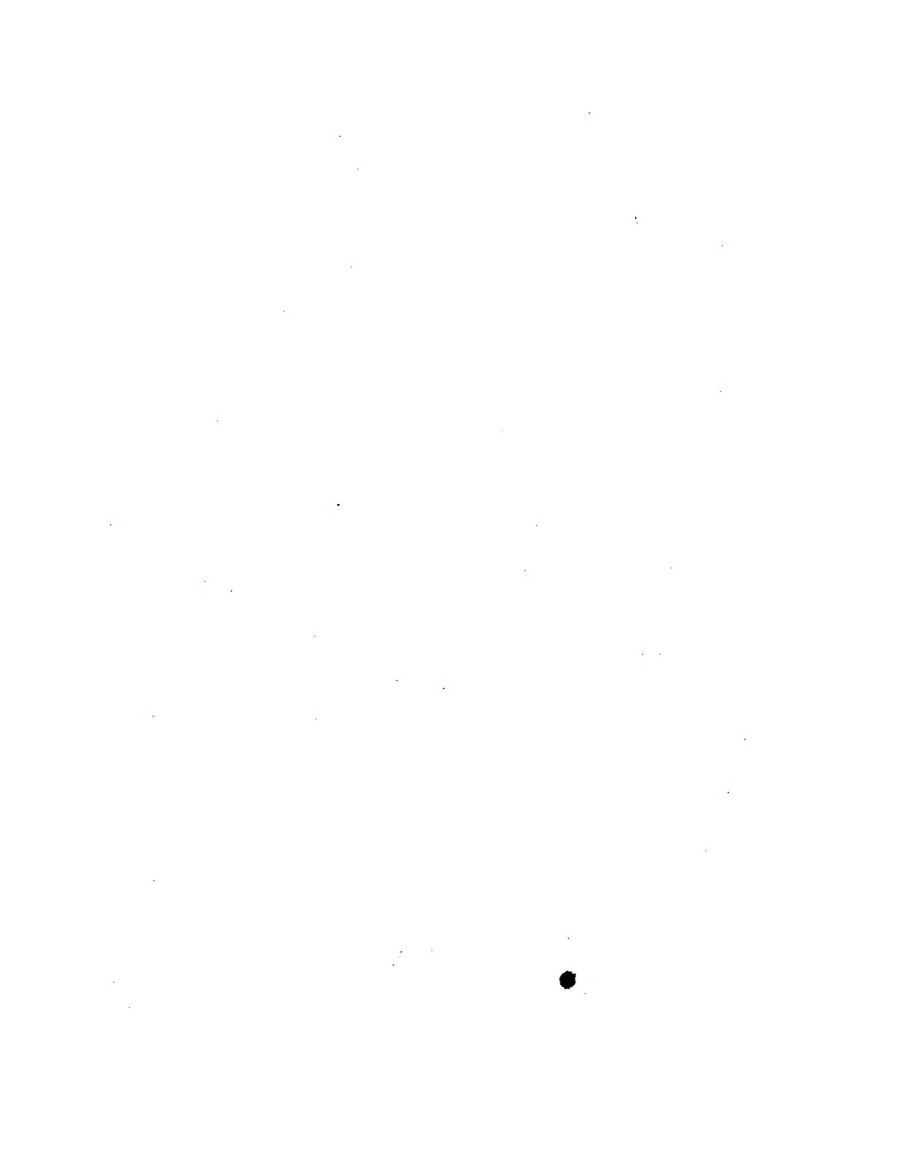


**LILIES THAT FESTER
AND
LOVE'S CONSTANCY**





THE PLAYHOUSE SERIES

LILIES THAT FESTER
AND
LOVE'S CONSTANCY

ARRANGED BY
WILLIAM POEL

DIRECTOR OF THE ELIZABETHAN
STAGE SOCIETY

BRENTANO'S : NEW YORK

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INTRODUCTION

THESE two plays are modified versions of older ones, and the second of them is in all probability a composition by Shakespeare. It originally formed a part of the early chronicle play, *Edward the Third*, a drama which can be said to have small dramatic or poetic merit beyond the love-scene supplied by Shakespeare. For this reason it is now separated from the rest of the chronicle so as to form a play complete in itself, and it has been given besides an independent title.

The first play is also re-named because it has been almost entirely reconstructed to allow of its being acted on the modern stage. Both dramas deal with the subject of unlawful love, but the method of treatment is strikingly different in each, as also is the portraiture of the two women,—Alice Arden and Lady Salisbury. They are in fact the antithesis of each other, and can with advantage be studied side by side. This the present publication renders convenient for the first time.

In the appendix many passages from *Love's Constaney* are quoted in comparison with other lines by Shakespeare to show their similarity in diction, and all of them belong to his lyrical period. Those who are familiar with the rhythm of Shakespeare's verse at the time he was writing *Richard the Second* will not fail to detect his hand in the new play. Nor is the similarity confined to the versification, for it is equally noticeable in the dramatic treatment of the subject. No other dramatist of the time would have invested such an episode with tragic pathos, nor have conceived that touching moment when the King sees reflected in his young son's face the image of the wife and

the mother whom he would wrong. Neither would any other contemporary writer have chosen for his theme the sin involved "in loving virtue." In this respect the play resembles *Measure for Measure*. Until Angelo has seen the saintly Isabella he has never known what it is to love.

"When men were fond I smiled and wondered how,"

describes his previous attitude. In the same way does Lady Salisbury's beauty move the King when he exclaims:

*"Whether is her beauty by her words divine,
Or are her words sweet chaplains to her beauty?"*

And Shakespeare by depicting in men, who are not in themselves ignoble, an infatuation for women who are types, the one of impassioned holiness, and the other of unwavering loyalty, has consciously heightened the difficulty of his task so that he may bring into full play all the marvellous resources of his poetic art, and lift the spectator into an atmosphere of the loftiest sentiment.

In what a different world of ideas are the characters of Alice Arden and Mosbie conceived! Here the passions are represented as being uncontrolled by any thought of moral responsibility, and they are not even excused by an aesthetic gratification. It is a picture of coarse realism drawn with unerring insight and power. While the story of *Love's Constancy* has in its hold over the intellect and the imagination a beauty comparable to a picture by Raphael, the intrigues of Arden's wife are in their way not unlike a study by Hogarth. Thus both compositions may be said to be the work of master minds, but can scarcely be classed as products of the same brain. All that can definitely be gathered as to the authorship of

the first play is that its excellence in verse and in characterization place it altogether beyond the powers of any writer of average ability. But we may take into consideration those unnamed authors who assisted in writing the three parts of *Henry the Sixth*, plays which were included in the first collected edition of Shakespeare's works. And it is certain that besides Shakespeare Marlowe also helped in these compositions, together with men of such acknowledged reputation as Greene, Kyd, and Lodge. If, however, Marlowe's *Edward the Second* is read in conjunction with the best scenes in *Arden of Faversham*, the metre and the metaphors will be found to have some resemblance. But Marlowe could never have created the humorous character of Black Will, and if this part was not written by Shakespeare it must be conceded that Pistol in *Henry the Fifth* is an open imitation of the part. Finally in regard to the question of authorship, in so far as it affects both plays, it is well to bear in mind that *Edward the Second*, *Edward the Third*, "the three parts of *Henry the Sixth*," and *Arden of Faversham*, are all compositions written within a short time of each other.

In justification of the reconstruction of scenes in the first play it must be remembered that by our early English playwrights the art of dramatic construction was still but little understood. A unity or design is wanting, as well as continuity of action leading directly to a climax. The interest around one scene is too often lost in the next, and the plays, when judged by modern standards, appear ineffective and unconvincing. In this respect *Everyman*, which has excited so deep an interest since it was first revived by the Elizabethan Stage So-

ciety, stands alone among the compositions of its time, nor except in the case of the plays of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Ford, do we find among the Elizabethan dramatists dramatic construction that is in any way suitable for the modern stage. This is mainly due to the fact that Elizabethan Plays needed an altogether different mode of presentation from that now in use. For this reason a reconstruction of *Arden of Feversham* was essential if the play was ever to be acted inside a twentieth century theatre.

It is much to be regretted that the repertory of old English plays which survives as acted drama is so small compared with the amount of dramatic material available,—material which is only waiting to be adapted to new conditions to enjoy a fresh lease of life on the stage. And there can be little doubt that the original authors themselves, were they now living, would not hesitate to reconstruct their plays sooner than see them confined to the bookshelf. But unfortunately whenever such adapting has been attempted by later dramatists such as Davenant, Colley Cibber, Lillo and others, it has rarely been of a satisfactory or lasting nature. This may be because the merits of the original work were not sufficiently appreciated. And so far as Elizabethan dramatic literature is concerned it was disastrous to interfere with the poetry, the dialogue, or the characterization. In these respects the adapters should have esteemed the work of the older dramatists as that of their masters; nor should any attempt have been made to take the story out of its proper environment. Merely in the art of construction, that is, in the art of presenting the story in a more consecutive and condensed form, should improvements

have been attempted. It is in this spirit that the present experiment has been made, with a view to bringing again into popular favour this lurid Kentish tragedy, a masterpiece of its kind, and one of the comparatively few plays of the sixteenth century in which the plot and action are founded upon English life and manners. And as regards the second play, *Love's Constancy*, the revision in this case, besides the removal of the episode from the chronicle play, consists in the addition of the necessary stage directions to make of it an independent play.

W. P.

LILIES THAT FESTER

A Tragedy

**ADAPTED FROM THE PLAY
ARDEN OF FAVERSHAM**

..

ARRANGED IN ONE ACT

BY

WILLIAM POEL

**DIRECTOR OF THE ELIZABETHAN
STAGE SOCIETY**

CHARACTERS

THOMAS ARDEN, *Gentleman of Faversham.*

FRANKLIN, *his Friend.*

MOSBIE, *Steward to Lord Clifford.*

CLARKE, *a Fop.*

BRADSHAW, *a Goldsmith.*

GREENE, *a Factor.*

MICHAEL, *Arden's Servant.*

BLACK WILL	} <i>Murderers.</i>
SHAKEBAG	

MAYOR OF FAVERSHAM AND WATCH

ALICE, *Arden's Wife.*

SUSAN, *Mosbie's Sister.*

SCENE: *The Parlour in Arden's House at Faversham.*

PERIOD, 1551.

First performed by the Elizabethan Stage Society at St. George's Hall, Langham Place, London, on July 9, 1897, with the following cast:

THOMAS ARDEN	<i>Mr. D. L. Mannering.</i>
FRANKLIN	<i>Mr. Paget Bowman.</i>
MOSBIE	<i>Mr. Leonard Outram.</i>
MICHAEL	<i>Mr. G. H. Blagrove.</i>
GREENE	<i>Mr. George Herbert.</i>
BLACK WILL	<i>Mr. Arthur Broughton.</i>
SHAKEBAG	<i>Mr. Playford.</i>
MAYOR	<i>Mr. C. Bright.</i>
ALICE	<i>Miss Alice Isaac.</i>
SUSAN	<i>Miss Ettie Carlisle.</i>

The play produced under the direction of
MR. WILLIAM POEL.

LILIES THAT FESTER

A Tragedy

IN ONE ACT



SCENE

A Parlour in the Manor House. At the back of the stage there is a door to the left leading to a porch, also a staircase to the right leading to a gallery, near which is a passage leading to the kitchen. On a sideboard is a tankard of wine with cups; on a table lie ARDEN'S whip, hat, gloves, and sword. It is early morning. MICHAEL is discovered looking anxiously towards the gallery. BLACK WILL and SHAKEBAG enter cautiously from the porch door.

WILL

Draw, Shakebag, for here's that villain Michael.

SHAKEBAG

Speak, milksop slave, and never after speak.

MICHAEL

For God's sake, sirs, let me excuse myself:
For here I swear, by heaven and earth and all,
I did perform the utmost of my task,
And left the doors unbolted and unlocked.
But see the chance: Franklin and my master
Were very late conferring in the porch,
And Franklin left his napkin where he sat
With certain gold knit in it, as he said.

Being in bed, he did bethink himself,
And coming down he found the doors unshut:
He locked the gates, and brought away the keys,
For which offence my master rated me.
But now I am going to see what flood it is,
For with the tide my master will away;
Lord Cheiny bids him to a feast at Shurland,
And by the way once more you'll meet with him,
Where you may front him well upon the coast,
A place well fitting such a stratagem.

WILL

And if all the Cheinies in the world say no,
I'll have a bullet in his breast to-morrow.
Your excuse hath somewhat mollified my choler.

SHAKEBAG

But is this true?

MICHAEL

As true as I report it to be true.

WILL

Come, Shakebag, let's go seek out Greene who now
Is at the alehouse butting Arden's house.

SHAKEBAG

And Michael you shall bear no news of this
For we will plot our purpose thoroughly.

MICHAEL

Why, I'll agree to anything you'll have me.

WILL

Come, let's go drink: choler makes me as dry as a dog.
[WILL and SHAKEBAG go out by the porch door.]

MICHAEL

Thus feeds the lamb securely on the down,
Whilst through the thicket of an arbour brake
The hunger-bitten wolf o'erpries his haunt
And takes advantage for to eat him up.
Ah, harmless Arden, how hast thou misdone,
That thus thy gentle life is levelled at?
The many good turns that thou hast done to me,
Now must I quittance, with betraying thee.
I that should take the weapon in my hand
And buckler thee from ill-intending foes,
Do lead thee with a wicked fraudulent smile,
As unsuspected, to the slaughter-house.
So have I sworn to Mosbie and my mistress,
So have I promised to the slaughtermen;
And should I not deal currently with them,
Their lawless rage would take revenge on me.
Tush, I will spurn at mercy for this once:
Let pity lodge where feeble women lie,
I am resolved, and Arden needs must die.

MICHAEL *goes out by the kitchen passage*; FRANKLIN
and ARDEN enter from the staircase.

FRANKLIN

Comfort thyself, sweet friend; it is not strange
That women will be false and wavering.

ARDEN

Ay, but to dote on such a one as he
Is monstrous, Franklin, and intolerable.

FRANKLIN

Why, what is he?

ARDEN

A botcher, and no better at the first;
Who, by base brokage getting some small stock,
Crept into service of a nobleman,
And by his servile flattery and fawning
Is now become the steward of his house,
And bravely jets it in his silken gown.

FRANKLIN

No nobleman will countenance such a peasant.

ARDEN

Yes, the Lord Clifford, he that loves not me.
But through his favour let him not grow proud;
For were he by the Lord Protector backed,
He should not make me to be pointed at.
I am by birth a gentleman of blood,
And that injurious ribald, he attempts
To violate my dear wife's chastity,
For dear I hold her love, as dear as heaven.

FRANKLIN

Be patient, gentle friend, and learn of me
To ease thy grief and save her chastity:
Intreat her fair; sweet words are fittest engines
To race the flint walls of a woman's breast.
In any case be not too jealous,
Nor make no question of her love to thee.

ARDEN

This night I dreamt that, being in a park,
A toil was pitched to overthrow the deer,
And I upon a little rising hill
Stood whistly watching for the herd's approach.

LILIES THAT FESTER

Even there, methought, a gentle slumber took me,
And summoned all my parts to sweet repose;
But in the pleasure of this golden rest
An ill-thewed foster had removed the toil,
And rounded me with that beguiling home
Which late, methought, was pitched to cast the deer.
With that he blew an evil-sounding horn,
And at the noise another herdman came,
With falchion drawn, and bent it at my breast,
Crying aloud, "Thou art the game we seek!"
With this I woke, and trembled every joint,
Like one obscured in a little bush,
That sees a lion foraging about,
And, when the dreadful forest-king is gone,
He pries about with timorous suspect
Throughout the thorny casements of the brake,
And will not think his person dangerless,
But quakes and shivers, though the cause be gone:
So, trust me, Franklin, when I did awake,
I stood in doubt whether I waked or no:
Such great impression took this fond surprise.
God grant this vision bedee me any good.

FRANKLIN

This fantasy doth rise from Michael's fear,
Who being awakèd with the noise he made,
His troubled senses yet could take no rest;
And this, I warrant you, procured your dream.

ARDEN

It may be so, God frame it to the best,
But oftentimes my dreams presage too true.

FRANKLIN

To such as note their nightly fantasies,
Some one in twenty may incur belief,
But use it not, 'tis but a mockery.

ALICE comes down the staircase.

ALICE

Husband, what mean you to get up so early?
Summer-nights are short, and yet you rise ere day.
Had I been wake, you had not risen so soon.

ARDEN

Sweet love, thou knowest that we two, Ovid-like,
Have often chid the morning when it 'gan to peep,
And often wished that dark night's purblind steeds
Would pull her by the purple mantle back,
And cast her in the ocean to her love.
But this night, sweet Alice, thou hast killed my heart:
I heard thee call on Mosbie in thy sleep.

ALICE

'Tis like I was asleep when I named him,
For being awake he comes not in my thoughts.

ARDEN

Ay, but you started up and suddenly,
Instead of him, caught me about the neck.

ALICE

Instead of him? why, who was there but you?
And where but one is, how can I mistake?

FRANKLIN

Arden, leave to urge her over-far.

ARDEN

Nay, love, there is no credit in a dream;
Let it suffice, I know thou lovest me well.

ALICE

Now I remember whereupon it came:
Had we no talk of Mosbie yesternight?

FRANKLIN

Mistress Alice, I heard you name him once or twice.

ALICE

And thereof came it, and therefore blame not me.

ARDEN

I know it did, and therefore let it pass.
Franklin and I will down unto the quay;
For I have certain goods there to unload.
Meanwhile prepare our breakfast, gentle Alice.

[ARDEN and FRANKLIN go out by the porch door.]

ALICE

Sweet love, come soon. O that some airy spirit
Would in the shape and likeness of a horse
Gallop with Arden 'cross the Oceän,
And throw him from his back into the waves
And make him wise in death that lived a fool.
Alas! 'tis Mosbie that hath won my heart:
Arden usurps it, having nought but this,
That I am tied to him by marriage.
Love is a God, and marriage is but words;
And is not Mosbie's title therefore best?
Tush! whether it be or no, he shall be mine,
In spite of him, of Hymen, and of rites.
There is no nectar, but in Mosbie's lips!

Had chaste Diana kissed him, she like me
Would grow love-sick, and from her watery bower
Fling down Endymion, and snatch him up.

MICHAEL enters from the passage.

MICHAEL

He whom you wot of, Mosbie, Mistress Alice,
Is come to town, and sends you word by me
In any case you may not visit him.

ALICE

Not visit him?

MICHAEL

No, nor take no knowledge of his being here.

ALICE

But tell me, is he angry or displeased?

MICHAEL

It should seem so, for he is wondrous sad.

ALICE

Were he as mad as raving Hercules,
I'll see him.

MICHAEL

Nay, then—

ALICE

Stay! Michael, stay!

Ask Mosbie how I have incurred his wrath;
Bear him from me these pair of silver dice,
With which we played for kisses many a time,
And when I lost, I won, and so did he;—
Such winning and such losing Jove send me!

And bid him, if his love do not decline,
To come this morning but along my door,
And as a stranger but salute me there:
This may he do without suspect or fear.

MICHAEL

I'll tell him what you say.

[MICHAEL *goes out*.]

ALICE

Do, and one day I'll make amends for all.—
I know he loves me well, but dares not come,
Because my husband is so jealous,
And these my narrow-prying neighbours blab,
Hinder our meetings when we would confer.
But, if I live, then thou that comes by stealth,
Shalt neither fear the biting speech of men,
Nor Arden's looks. [MOSBIE *appears in the passage*.]
Mosbie my love!

MOSBIE

Away, I say, and talk not to me now.

ALICE

A word or two, sweetheart, and then I will.
'Tis yet but early days, thou needst not fear.

MOSBIE

Where is your husband?

ALICE

'Tis now high water, and he is at the quay.

MOSBIE

There let him be; henceforward know me not.

ALICE

Is this the end of all thy solemn oaths?
Is this the fruit thy reconciliation buds?
Have I for this given thee so many favours,
Incurred my husband's hate, and, out alas!
Made shipwreck of mine honour for thy sake?
And dost thou say "henceforward know me not?"
The heavens can witness, and the world can tell,
Before I saw that falsehood look of thine,
'Fore I was tangled with thy 'ticing speech,
Arden to me was dearer than my soul,—
And shall be still: base peasant, get thee gone,
And boast not of thy conquest over me,
Gotten by witchcraft and mere sorcery!
For what hast thou to countenance my love,
Being descended of a noble house,
And matched already with a gentleman
Whose servant thou may'st be!—and so farewell.

MOSBIE

Ungentle and unkind Alice, now I see
That which I ever feared, and find too true:
A woman's love is as the lightning-flame,
Which even in bursting forth consumes itself.
To try thy constancy have I been strange;
Would I had never tried, but lived in hope!

ALICE

What need'st thou try me whom thou ne'er found false?

MOSBIE

Yet pardon me, for love is jealous.

ALICE

So lists the sailor to the mermaid's song,
So looks the traveller to the basilisk:
I am content for to be reconciled,
And that, I know, will be mine overthrow.

MOSBIE

Thine overthrow? first let the world dissolve.

ALICE

Nay, Mosbie, let me still enjoy thy love,
And happen what will, I am resolute.
My saving husband hoards up bags of gold
To make our homestead rich, and now is he
Gone to unload the goods that shall be thine,
Why should he thrust his sickle in our corn,
Or what hath he to do with thee, my love,
Or govern me that am to rule myself?
Forsooth, for credit sake, I must leave thee!
Nay, he must leave to live that we may love,
May live, may love; for what is life but love?
And love shall last as long as life remains,
And life shall end before my love depart.

MOSBIE

Why, what is love without true constancy?
Like to a pillar built of many stones,
Yet neither with good mortar well compact
Nor with cement to fasten it in the joints,
But that it shakes with every blast of wind,
And, being touched, straight falls unto the earth,
And buries all his haughty pride in dust.
No, let our love be rocks of adamant,
Which time nor place nor tempest can asunder.

ALICE

Mosbie, leave protestations now,
And let us bethink us what we have to do.

MOSBIE and ALICE go out by the staircase. SUSAN enters
from the passage and prepares the table for breakfast;
she is followed by CLARKE.

SUSAN

Ah, that thou couldst be secret!

CLARKE

Let it suffice. I know she loves me well,
And fain would have her husband made away:
Wherein, trust me, she shows a noble mind,
That rather than she'll live with him she hates
She'll venture life and die with him she loves.

SUSAN

This well I know,
That nothing would enforce her to the deed
But love of thee. Might she without control
Enjoy thy love, then Arden should not die.

CLARKE

But seeing she cannot, therefore let him die.
I happened on a painter yesternight,
The only cunning man of Christendom;
For he can temper poison with his oil,
That whoso looks upon the work he draws
Shall, with the beams that issue from his sight,
Suck venom to his breast and slay himself.
Let him then draw thy mistress' counterfeit,
That Arden may, by gazing on it, perish.

SUSAN

Ay, gentle sir, but that is dangerous,
For thou, or I, or any other else,
Coming into the chamber where it hangs may die.

CLARKE

Ay, but she'll have it covered with a cloth
And hung up in the study for himself.

SUSAN

It may not be, for when the picture's drawn,
Arden, you know, might come and show it me.

CLARKE

I do remember once in secret talk
He told me how he could compound by art
A crucifix impoisoned.
That whoso look upon it should wax blind,
And with the scent be stifled, that ere long
He should die poisoned that did view it well.
Now let him make me such a crucifix,
And then I know your mistress will be mine.

SUSAN

Nay, I am loth because it toucheth other's life,
Besides, no way in reason is it possible
That he should paint and draw it out himself,
The colours being baleful and impoisoned,
And no way prejudice himself withal.

CLARKE

Well questioned, wench, but yet I'll answer you,
And easily, for I can tell you straight
How he does work of these impoisoned drugs.

He fastens on his spectacles so close
As nothing can offend the needed sight.
Then as he puts a leaf within his nose,
So puts he rhubarb to avoid the smell,
And softly as another work he paints.

SUSAN

Enough! Enough!
Your trick of poisoned pictures we dislike;
Some other poison would do better far.

CLARKE

Ay, such as might be put into his broth,
And yet in taste not to be found at all.
I know your mind, and here I have it for you.
Put but a dram of this into his drink,
Or any kind of broth that he shall eat,
And he shall die within an hour after.

SUSAN

And as I am her waiting-maid, next day
Thou and my mistress shall be married.

MICHAEL *enters from the passage.*

MICHAEL [*aside*]

Now who is this? The rhymester,
He who Mistress Susan needs would win;
And I to humour her do call my corrival.

CLARKE

How now, Michael? How doth your mistress?

MICHAEL

Who? Susan Mosbie? She is your mistress too?

CLARKE

Ay, how doth she and all the rest?

MICHAEL

All's well but Susan; she is sick.

SUSAN

Sick!

CLARKE

Of what disease?

MICHAEL

Of a great fever.

CLARKE

A fever?

SUSAN

God forbid!

MICHAEL

Yes, faith, and of a lordaine* too, as big as yourself.

SUSAN

Oh, Michael, the spleen prickles you.

CLARKE

Go to, you carry an eye over Mistress Susan.

MICHAEL

I' faith, to keep her from the rhymester.

CLARKE

Why more from a rhymester than from a serving creature
like yourself?

* *Clown.*

MICHAEL

Because you rhymesters can spoil her beauty with blotting.

CLARKE

And but another word will cost you a cuff or a knock.

MICHAEL

What, with a dagger made of a pencil?

Faith, 'tis too weak, and therefore thou too weak to win
Susan.

CLARKE

Would Susan's love lay upon this stroke.

[*He boxes MICHAEL's ears.*]

SUSAN

I'll lay my life 'tis not for Susan's love!

ARDEN and FRANKLIN *return by the porch door*; SU-
SAN, CLARKE, and MICHAEL *run down the passage.*

ARDEN

No, Franklin, no: if fear or stormy threats,
If love of me or care of womanhood,
If fear of God or common speech of men,
Who mangle credit with their wounding words,
And couch dishonour as dishonour buds,
Might join repentance in her wanton thoughts,
No question then but she would turn the leaf
And sorrow for her dissolution;
But she is rooted in her wickedness,
Perverse and stubborn, not to be reclaimed;
Good counsel is to her as rain to weeds,
And reprehension makes her vice to grow
As Hydra's head that plenisht by decay.
Her faults, methink, are painted in my face,

For every searching eye to overread;
And Mosbie's name, a scandal unto mine,
Is deeply trenchèd in my blushing brow.
Ah, Franklin, Franklin, when I think on this,
My heart's grief rends my other powers
Worse than the conflict at the hour of death.

FRANKLIN

Gentle Arden, leave this sad lament:
She will amend, and so your griefs will cease;
Or else she'll die, and so your sorrows end.
If neither of these two do haply fall,
Yet let your comfort be that others bear
Your woes, twice doubled all, with patience.

ARDEN

My house is irksome; here I cannot rest.

FRANKLIN

Then come with me to London; stay not here.

ARDEN

Then that base Mosbie doth usurp my room
And makes his triumph of my being thence.
At home or not at home, where'er I be,
Here, here it lies, ah, Franklin, here it lies
That will not out till wretched Arden dies.

[ARDEN *buries his face in his hands.*]

FRANKLIN

Ah, what a hell is fretful jealousy!
What pity-moving words, what deep-fetched sighs,
What grievous groans and overlading woes
Accompanies this gentle gentleman!
Now will he shake his care-oppressèd head,

Then fix his sad eyes on the sullen earth,
Ashamed to gaze upon the open world;
Now will he cast his eyes up towards the heaven,
Looking that way for redress of wrong:
Sometimes he seeketh to beguile his grief
And tells a story with his careful tongue;
Then comes his wife's dishonour in his thoughts
And in the middle cutteth off his tale,
Pouring fresh sorrow on his weary limbs.
So woe-begone, so inly charged with woe,
Was never any lived and bare it so.

ALICE and MOSBIE return by the staircase.

ALICE

In good time see where my husband is,
Master Mosbie, ask him the question yourself.

MOSBIE

Master Arden, being at London yesternight,
The Abbey lands, whereof you are now possessed,
Were offered me on some occasion
By Greene, one of Sir Antony Ager's men:
I pray you, sir, tell me, are not the lands yours?
Hath any other interest herein?

ARDEN

Mosbie, that question we'll decide anon.
Alice, make ready my breakfast, I must hence.

[ALICE goes down the passage.]

As for the lands, Mosbie, they are mine
By letters patents from his Majesty.
But I must have a mandate for my wife;
They say you seek to rob me of her love:

Villain, what makes thou in her company?
She's no companion for so base a groom.

MOSBIE

Arden, I thought not on her, I came to thee;
But rather than I pocket up this wrong—

FRANKLIN

What will you do, sir?

MOSBIE

Revenge it on the proudest of you both.

[ARDEN *draws* MOSBIE's sword out of its scabbard.]

ARDEN

So, sirrah; you may not wear a sword,
The statute makes against artificers;
I warrant that I do. Now use your bodkin,
Your Spanish needle, and your pressing iron,
For this shall go with me; and mark my words,
You goodman botcher, 'tis to you I speak:
The next time that I take thee near my house,
Instead of legs I'll make thee crawl on stumps.

MOSBIE

Ah, Master Arden, you have injured me:
I do appeal to God and to the world.

FRANKLIN

Why, canst thou deny thou wert a botcher once?

MOSBIE

Measure me what I am, not what I was.

ARDEN

Why, what art thou now but a velvet drudge,
A cheating steward, and base-minded peasant?

MOSBIE

Arden, now thou hast belched and vomited
The rancorous venom of thy mis-swoll'n heart,
Hear me but speak: as I intend to live
With God and his elected saints in heaven,
I never meant more to solicit her;
And that she knows, and all the world shall see.
I loved her once—sweet Arden, pardon me,
I could not choose, her beauty fired my heart,
But time hath quenched these over-raging coals;
And, Arden, though I now frequent thy house,
'Tis for my sister's sake, her waiting-maid,
And not for hers. Mayest thou enjoy her long:
Hell-fire and wrathful vengeance light on me,
If I dishonour her or injure thee.

ARDEN

Mosbie, with these thy protestations
The deadly hatred of my heart's appeased,
And thou and I'll be friends, if this prove true.
As for the base terms I gave thee late,
Forget them, Mosbie; I had cause to speak,
When all the knights and gentlemen of Kent
Make common table talk of her and thee.

MOSBIE

Who lives that is not touched with slanderous tongues?

FRANKLIN

Then, Mosbie, to eschew the speech of men,
Upon whose general bruit all honour hangs,
Forbear his house.

ARDEN

Forbear it! nay, rather frequent it more:
The world shall see that I distrust her not,
To warn him on the sudden from my house
Were to confirm the rumour that is grown.

MOSBIE

By my faith, sir, you say true,
And therefore will I sojourn here a while,
Until our enemies have talked their fill;
And then, I hope, they'll cease, and at last confess
How causeless they have injured her and me.

ALICE *returns with SUSAN and MICHAEL who are carrying the breakfast.*

ALICE

Husband, sit down; your breakfast will be cold.

ARDEN

Come, Master Mosbie, will you sit with us?

MOSBIE

I cannot eat, but I'll sit for company.

[They sit and ARDEN eats some porridge.]

ARDEN

Sirrah Michael, see our horse be ready.
Come, Master Franklin, onwards with your tale.

FRANKLIN

Do you remember where my tale did leave?

ARDEN

Ay, where the gentleman did check his wife.

FRANKLIN

Pardon me, Master Arden, but not now.

ARDEN

Nay! a pretty tale beguiles—

ALICE

Husband, why pause ye? why eat you not?

ARDEN

I am not well; there's something in this porridge—
A heavy blood is gathered at my heart,
And in the sudden is my wind so short—
This is not wholesome: didst thou make it, Alice?

ALICE

I did, and that's the cause it likes not you.

[She snatches up his bowl of porridge and throws it on the ground.]

There's nothing that I do can please your taste;
You were best to say I would have poisoned you.
I cannot speak or cast aside my eye,
But he imagines I have stepped awry.
Here's he that you cast in my teeth so oft:
I charge thee speak to this mistrustful man,
Thou that wouldst see me hang, thou, Mosbie, thou:
What favour hast thou had more than a kiss
At coming or departing from the town?

MOSBIE

You wrong yourself and me to cast these doubts:
Your loving husband is not jealous.

ARDEN

Why, gentle Mistress Alice, cannot I be ill
But you'll accuse yourself?
Franklin, thou hast a box of mithridate;
I'll take a little to prevent the worst.

[All rise.]

FRANKLIN

Do so, and let us presently take horse;
My life for yours, ye shall do well enough.

ALICE

Give me a spoon, I'll eat of it myself;
Would it were full of poison to the brim,
Then should my cares and troubles have an end.
Was ever silly woman so tormented?

ARDEN

Be patient, sweet love; I mistrust not thee.

ALICE

God will revenge it, Arden, if thou dost;
For never woman loved her husband better
Than I do thee.

ARDEN

I know it, sweet Alice; cease to complain,
Lest that in tears I answer thee again.
The season fits; come, Franklin, let's away.

ALICE

I thought you did pretend some special hunt,
That made you thus cut short the time of rest.

ARDEN

It was no chase that made me rise so early,
But, as I told thee yesternight, to go
To the Isle of Sheppy, there to dine with my Lord
Cheiny;
For so his honour late commanded me.

ALICE

Ay, such kind husbands seldom want excuses;

Home is a wild cat to a wandering wit.
The time hath been,—would God it were not past,—
That honour's title nor a lord's command
Could once have drawn you from these arms of mine.
But my deserts or your desires decay,
Or both; yet if true love may seem desert,
I merit still to have thy company,

FRANKLIN

Why, I pray you, sir, let her go along with us;
I am sure his honour will welcome her
And us the more for bringing her along.

ARDEN

Content; sirrah, saddle your mistress' nag.

ALICE

No! Begged favour merits little thanks;
If I should go, our house would run away,
Or else be stolen; therefore I'll stay behind.

ARDEN

Nay, see how mistaking you are! I pray thee, go.

ALICE

No, no, not now.

ARDEN

Then let me leave thee satisfied in this,
That time nor place nor persons alter me,
But that I hold thee dearer than my life.

ALICE

That by your quick return will soon be seen.
Farewell, husband, seeing you'll have it so;

And, Master Franklin, seeing you take him hence,
In hope you'll hasten him home, I'll give you this.

[*Kisses him.*]

FRANKLIN

And if he stay, the fault shall not be mine.
Mosbie, farewell, and see you keep your oath.

MOSBIE

I hope he is not jealous of me now.

ARDEN

No, Mosbie, no; hereafter think of me
As of your dearest friend, and so farewell.

FRANKLIN

Come, Michael, are our horses ready?

MICHAEL

Ay, your horses are ready, but I am not ready, for I have
lost my purse with six and thirty shillings in't.

FRANKLIN

Why, I pray you, let us go before, while he stays behind
to seek his purse.

ARDEN

Go to, sirrah! See you follow us to the Isle of Sheppy,
To my Lord Cheiny's, where we mean to dine.

[ARDEN and FRANKLIN go out by the porch.]

MICHAEL [*at the porch door*]

So fare weather after you, for before you lies Black Will
and Shakebag in the alehouse close, too close for you:
they'll be your ferrymen to long home.

[MICHAEL goes out by the passage. ALICE and
MOSBIE look at each other for a moment in silence.]

ALICE

Why, he's as well now as he was before.

MOSBIE

But had he eaten but three spoonfuls more
Then had he died, and so our love continued.

ALICE

Why, so it shall, Mosbie, albeit he live.

MOSBIE

It is impossible, for I have sworn
Never hereafter to solicit thee,
Or, whilst he lives, once more importune thee.

ALICE

Thou shalt not need, I will importune thee.
What, shall an oath make thee forsake my love?
As if I have not sworn as much myself
And given my hand unto him in the church!
Tush, Mosbie; oaths are words, and words is wind,
And wind is mutable: then, I conclude,
'Tis childishness to stand upon an oath.

MOSBIE

Well proved, Mistress Alice; yet by your leave
I'll keep mine unbroken whilst he lives.

ALICE

I've such good news that I must laugh with joy
Before I can begin my tale.

MOSBIE

Let's hear them, that I may laugh for company.

ALICE

Last morning, Master Greene, Dick Greene I mean,
From whom my husband had the Abbey land,
Came hither, railing, for to know the truth
Whether my husband had the lands by grant.
I told him all, whereat he stormed amain
And swore he would cry quittance with the churl,
And, if he did deny his interest,
Stab him, whatsoever did befall himself.
Whenas I saw his choler thus to rise,
I whetted on the gentleman with words;
And, to conclude, Mosbie, at last he grew
To composition for my husband's death.
I gave him ten pounds for to hire knaves,
By some device to make away the churl;
When he is dead he shall have twenty more,
And repossess his former lands again.
On this we 'greed, and he is plotting straight.

MOSBIE

But call you this good news?

ALICE

Ay, sweetheart, be they not?

MOSBIE

'Twere cheerful news to hear the churl were dead;
But trust me, Alice, I take it passing ill
You would be so forgetful of our state
To make recount of it to every groom.
What! to acquaint each stranger with our drifts,
Chiefly in case of murder, why, 'tis the way
To make it open unto Arden's self
And bring thyself and me to ruin both.

Forewarned, forearmed; who threatens his enemy
Lends him a sword to guard himself withal.

ALICE

I did it for the best.

MOSBIE

Well, seeing 'tis done, cheerly let it pass.
You know this Greene; is he not religious?
A man, I guess, of great devotion?

ALICE

He is.

MOSBIE

'Twill serve the turn.

Now, Alice, let's in and see what cheer you keep.

ALICE

Mosbie, you know, who's master of my heart,
He well may be the master of the house.

ALICE and MOSBIE *go out by the staircase*; MICHAEL
returns by the passage with SUSAN; *she clears the*
breakfast table.

MICHAEL

Ah, Mistress Susan, abolish that paltry rhymester; cut
him off by the shins with a frowning look of your
crabbed countenance, and think upon Michael, who
drunk with the dregs of your favour, will cleave as fast
to your love as a plaster of pitch to a galled horseback.
I hope you'll think on me.

SUSAN

Ay; but, good Michael, see you keep your oath,
As you are resolute, be you as secret.

MICHAEL

I'll see he shall not live above a week.

SUSAN

On that condition, Michael, know in truth
None shall have Mosbie's sister but thyself.

MICHAEL

Nay, but they say that rhymester here hard by
Hath made report that he and you are sure.

SUSAN

There's no such matter, Michael; believe it not.

MICHAEL

But he hath sent a dagger sticking in a heart,
With a verse or two stolen from a painted cloth,
The which I hear thou keepest in thy chest.
Well, keep it there! I shall find a fellow
That can both write and read and make rhymes too.
And if I do—well, I say no more:
For I will send thee such a taunting letter
As thou shalt eat the heart he sent with salt,
And fling the dagger at this rhymester's head.

SUSAN

What needs all this? I say that I am thine.

MICHAEL

Why, then, I say that I will kill thy master,
Or anything that thou wilt have me do.

SUSAN

But, Michael, see you do it cunningly.

MICHAEL

Why, say I should be took, I'll ne'er confess
That you know anything; and since you are a maid,
You'll beg me from the gallows of the sheriff.

SUSAN

Trust not to that, Michael.

MICHAEL

You cannot tell, and I have seen it, I.
But Susan knows, whether I live or die,
I'll make her worth more than that rhymester can.
For I will rid mine elder brother away,
And then the farm of Bolton will be mine,
Who would not venture upon house and land
When he may have it for a right down blow?

[The porch door opens.]

SUSAN

Yonder comes Greene. Michael, get thee gone,
And let not him nor any know thy drift.

MICHAEL *[aside]*

Shall I be married to so base a trull
As Mosbie's sister? Nay, not I. Squire Franklin
Shall rouse her from remaining in this house.
Both she and Mosbie, Clarke and Greene and all,
A crew of harlots!

MICHAEL *goes down the passage; GREENE enters by the porch door.*

GREENE

Ah, Mistress Susan, now well met in faith.
And so I hear your master is from home.
But where's your mistress, may I speak with her?

SUSAN

What is it, Master Greene? If that I may
Or can with safety, I will answer you.

GREENE

Your master does me wrong
To wring me from the little land I have
And what is left remainder of my portion
Which is my life, alas! Ay, only that.
Desire of wealth is endless in his mind,
And he is greedy—gaping still for gain;
Nor cares he though young gentlemen do beg,
So he may scrape and hoard up in his pouch.
But, seeing he hath ta'en my lands, I'll value life
As careless as he is careful for to get;
And tell your mistress that I am revenged,
And so she'll hear within this hour at most.

SUSAN

Alas, poor gentleman, I pity you,
And woe is me that any man should want!
God knows 't is not her fault; but wonder not
Though he be hard to others, when to my mistress
Ah, Master Greene, God knows how she is used.

GREENE

Why, Mistress Susan, can the crabbed churl
Use her unkindly? Respects he not her birth,
Her honourable friends, nor what she brought?
Nor parentage? Why, all Kent knows her worth.

SUSAN

Ah, Master Greene, be it spoken in secret here,
She never lives good day with him alone:

When he's at home, then has she froward looks,
Hard words and blows to mend the match withal;
And though she might content as good a man,
Yet doth he keep in every corner trulls;
And when he wearies of his trugs at home,
Then rides he straight to London; there, forsooth,
He revels it among such filthy ones
As counsels him to make away his wife.
Thus live she daily in continual fear,
In sorrow; so despairing of redress
As every day she wish with hearty prayer
That he or she were taken from the world.

GREENE

Now trust me, Mistress Susan; it grieveth me
So fair a creature should be so abused.
Why, who would have thought the civil sir so sullen
He looks so smoothly. Now, fie upon him, churl!
And if he live a day, he lives too long.

SUSAN

But speak you as you think?

GREENE

Ay, God's my witness; I mean plain dealing
So she keep promise with me about my land.

SUSAN

Or count her false, or perjured whilst I live.

[The porch door opens slowly.]

GREENE

But here's Black Will. Perchance—
You shall hear more anon. I'll follow you.

SUSAN

Good fortune follow all your forward thoughts.

SUSAN *leaves by the passage as BLACK WILL and
SHAKEBAG enter by the porch door.*

GREENE

What, is he down, is he dispatched?

SHAKEBAG

Ay, in health towards Surland to shame us all.

GREENE

The devil he is! why, sirs, how escaped he?

SHAKEBAG

When we were ready to shoot,
Comes my Lord Cheiny to prevent his death.

GREENE

The Lord of Heaven hath preserved him!

WILL

Preserved a fig! the Lord Cheiny hath preserved him,
And bids him to a feast to his house at Surland.

GREENE

What! dare you not do it?

WILL

Yes, sir, we dare do it; but, were my consent to give again, we would not do it under ten pound more. I value every drop of my blood at a French crown. I have had ten pound to steal a dog, and we have no more here to kill a man; but that a bargain is a bargain, and so forth, you should do it yourself.

GREENE

I pray thee, how came thy head broke?

WILL

Why, thou seest it is broke, dost thou not?

SHAKEBAG

But forbearance is no acquittance; another time we'll do it, I warrant thee.

GREENE

I pray thee, Will, make clean thy bloody brow,
And let us think upon some other place
Where Arden may be met with handsomely.
Remember how devoutly thou hast sworn
To kill the villain; think upon thine oath.

WILL

Tush, I have broken five-hundred oaths!
But wouldst thou charm me to effect this deed,
Tell me of gold, my resolution's fee;
Say thou seest Mosbie kneeling at my knees,
Offering me service for my high attempt;
And sweet Alice Arden, with a lap of crowns,
Comes with a lowly curtesy to the earth,
Saying "Take this but for thy quarterage,
Such yearly tribute will I answer thee."
Why, this would steel soft-mettled cowardice,
With which Black Will was never tainted yet.
I tell thee, Greene, the forlorn traveller,
Whose lips are glued with summer's parching heat,
Ne'er longed so much to see a running brook
As I to finish Arden's tragedy.
Seest thou this gore that cleaveth to my face?

From hence ne'er will I wash this bloody stain,
Till Arden's heart be panting in my hand.

GREENE

Why, that's well said; but what saith Shakebag?

SHAKEBAG

I cannot paint my valour out with words:
But, give me place and opportunity,
Such mercy as the starven lioness,
When she is dry sucked of her eager young,
Shows to the prey that next encounters her,
On Arden so much pity would I take.

GREENE

So should it fare with men of firm resolve.

MICHAEL returns by the passage.

MICHAEL

How now, Master Shakebag? what, Black Will!
God's dear lady, how chance your face is so bloody?

WILL

Go to, sirrah, there is a chance in it; this sauciness in
you will make you be knocked.

MICHAEL

Nay, an you be offended, I'll be gone.

GREENE

Stay, Michael, you may not escape us so.
Michael, I know you love your master well.

MICHAEL

Why, so I do; but wherefore urge you that?

GREENE

Because I think you love your mistress better.

MICHAEL

So think not I; but say, i' faith, what if I should?

SHAKEBAG

Come to the purpose, Michael; we hear
You have a pretty love in Faversham.

MICHAEL

Why, have I two or three, what's that to thee!

WILL

You deal too mildly with the peasant. Thus it is;
'Tis known to us that you love Mosbie's sister;
We know besides that you have ta'en your oath
To further Mosbie to your mistress' house
And kill your master for his sister's sake.
Now, sir, a poorer coward than yourself
Was never fostered in the coast of Kent:
How comes it then that such a knave as you
Dare swear a matter of such consequence?

GREENE

Ah, Will—

WILL

Tush, give me leave, there's no more but this:
Sith thou hast sworn, we dare discover all;
And hadst thou or should'st thou utter it,
We have devised a complat under hand,
Whatever shall betide to any of us,
To send thee roundly to the devil of hell.
And therefore thus: *I* am the very man,

Marked in my birth-hour by the destinies,
To give an end to Arden's life on earth;
Thou but a member but to whet the knife
Whose edge must serve the closet of his breast:
Thy office is but to appoint the place,
And train thy master to his tragedy;
Mine to perform it when occasion serves.
Then be not nice, but here devise with us
How and what way we may conclude his death.

SHAKEBAG

So shalt thou purchase Mosbie for thy friend,
And by his friendship gain his sister's love.

GREENE

So shall thy mistress be thy favourer,
And thou disburdened of the oath thou made.

MICHAEL

Well, gentlemen, I cannot but confess,
Sith you have urged me so apparently,
That I have vowed my master Arden's death;
And he whose kindly love and liberal hand
Doth challenge nought but good deserts of me,
I will deliver over to your hands.

SHAKEBAG

Come, Will, see thy tools be in a readiness!
Is not thy powder dank, or will thy flint strike fire?

WILL

Then ask me if my nose be on my face,
Or whether my tongue be frozen in my mouth.
Zounds, here's a coil!
You were best swear me on the interrogatories

How many pistols I have took in hand,
Or whether I love the smell of gunpowder,
Or dare abide the noise the dag* will make,
Or will not wink at flashing of the fire.
I pray thee, Shakebag, let this answer thee,
That I have took more purses on a down
Than e'er thou handledst pistols in thy life.

SHAKEBAG

Ay, haply thou hast picked more in a throng:
But, should I brag what booties I have took,
I think the overplus that's more than thine
Would mount to a greater sum of money
Then either thou or all thy kin are worth.
Zounds, I hate them as I hate a toad
That carry a muscado in their tongue,
And scarce a hurting weapon in their hand.

WILL

O Greene, intolerable!

It is not for mine honour to bear this.

Why, Shakebag, I did serve the king at Boulogne,
And thou canst brag of nothing that thou hast done.

SHAKEBAG

Why, so can Jack of Faversham,
That sounded for a fillip on the nose,
When he that gave it him holloed in his ear,
And he supposed a cannon bullet hit him.

GREENE

I pray you, sirs, list to Æsop's talk:

Whilst two stout dogs were striving for a bone,

There comes a cur and stole it from them both;
So, while you stand striving on these terms of manhood,
Arden escapes us, and deceives us all.

SHAKEBAG

Why, he begun.

WILL

And thou shalt find I'll end;
I do but slip it until better time:
But, if I do forget—

[WILL kneels as if protesting before Heaven.]

GREENE

Well, take your fittest standings, and once more
Lime well your twigs to catch this wary bird.

SHAKEBAG

He's dead as if he had been condemned by Act of Par-
liament, if once Black Will and I swear his death.

GREENE

But, sirs, be sure to speed him when he comes.

SHAKEBAG

If he be not paid his own, ne'er trust Shakebag.

WILL

My fingers itches to be at the peasant,
Ah! that I might be set awork thus through the year,
and that murder would grow to an occupation that a
man might follow without danger of law.

GREENE

But brawl not when I am gone, in any case.
And now I'll leave you till the deed be done.

[GREENE goes out by the porch door.]

WILL

Sirrah, Shakebag, at his coming home I'll run him
through,
And then to the quay, and there take water and away.

SHAKEBAG

And see thou miss him not.

GREENE *returns.*

GREENE

Ay, and excuse yourselves to Mistress Arden,
O, how she'll chafe when she shall hear of this.

SUSAN *enters with lights.*

WILL

Zounds, I could kill myself for very anger,
His lordship chops me in,
Even when my dag was levelled at his heart.

GREENE

Why, I'll warrant you she'll think you dare not do it.

SHAKEBAG

Arden he has wondrous holy luck.
Did ever man escape as he has done?

SUSAN

Fie, what a mist there is!

GREENE

And this same mist, good Sue, is mystical.
Like to a pothouse stinkard's brain,
That was half drowned with new ale over-night.

SUSAN

'Twere pity but his skull were opened to make more
chimney-room.

WILL [*at porch door*]

Did you ever see such a mist as this?

SUSAN

Nor two such cowards, so will my mistress say.

WILL

Then let us wait and tell her all the matter,
And plot the news to cut him off to-morrow.
Come, Shakebag, we'll go drink and then return.

GREENE

Now ye have missed the mark of your intent!

[BLACK WILL, SHAKEBAG, and GREENE go out
by the porch door; SUSAN retires down the passage.]

MICHAEL [*alone*]

That grim-faced fellow, pitiless Black Will,
And Shakebag, stern in bloody stratagem,
—Two rougher ruffians never lived in Kent,—
Have sworn my death, if I infringe my vow,
A dreadful thing to be considered of.
My Master's kindness pleads to me for life
With just demand and I must grant it him.
Methinks I see them with their bolstered hair
Staring and grinning in my master's face,
And in their ruthless hands their daggers drawn,
Insulting o'er him with a peck of oaths,
Whilst he submissive, pleading for relief,
Is mangled by their ireful instruments.
Methinks I hear them ask where Michael is,
And pitiless Black Will cries: "Stab the slave!
The peasant will detect the tragedy!"
The wrinkles in his foul death-threat'ning face

Gapes open wide, like graves to swallow men.
My death to him is but a merriment,
And he will murder me to make him sport.
My trembling joints witness my inward fear.

MICHAEL *goes out by the porch door*; MOSBIE *enters from the staircase.*

MOSBIE

Disturbèd thoughts drives me from company
And dries my marrow with their watchfulness;
Continual trouble of my moody brain
Feebles my body by excess of drink,
And nips me as the bitter north-east wind
Doth check the tender blossoms in the spring.
Well fares the man, howe'er his cates do taste,
That tables not with foul suspicion;
And he but pines amongst his delicates,
Whose troubled mind is stuffed with discontent.
My golden time was when I had no gold;
Though then I wanted, yet I slept secure;
My daily toil begat me night's repose,
My night's repose made daylight fresh to me.
But since I climbed the top-bough of the tree
And sought to build my nest among the clouds,
Each gentle stirry gale doth shake my bed,
And makes me dread my downfall to the earth.
But whither doth contemplation carry me?
The one I seek to find, where pleasure dwells,
Is hedged behind me that I cannot back,
But needs must on, although to danger's gate.
Then, Arden, perish thou by that decree;
For Greene doth ear the land and weed thee up
To make my harvest nothing but pure corn.

And for his pains I'll hive him up a while,
And after smother him to have his wax:
Such bees as Greene must never live to sting.
Then is there Michael, Clarke, and Shakebag, too,
Chief actors now to Arden's overthrow;
Who when they see me sit in Arden's seat,
They will insult upon me for my meed,
Or fright me by detecting of his end.
I'll none of that, for I can cast a bone
To make these curs pluck out each other's throat,
And then am I sole ruler of mine own.
Yet Mistress Arden lives; but she's myself,
And holy Church rites makes us two but one.
But what for that? I may not trust you, Alice:
You have supplanted Arden for my sake,
And will extirpen me to plant another.
'Tis fearful sleeping in a serpent's bed,
And I will cleanly rid my hands of her.

ALICE comes down the staircase; a breviary is in her hand.

But here she comes, and I must flatter her.
—How now, Alice? what, sad and passionate?
Make me partaker of thy pensiveness:
Fire divided burns with lesser force.

ALICE

But I will dam that fire in my breast
Till by the force thereof my part consume.
Ah, Mosbie!

MOSBIE

Such deep pathaires, like to a cannon's burst
Discharged against a ruined wall,

Breaks my relenting heart in thousand pieces.
Ungentle Alice, thy sorrow is my sore;
Thou know'st it well, and 'tis thy policy
To forge distressful looks to wound a breast
Where lies a heart that dies when thou art sad.
It is not love that loves to anger love.

ALICE

It is not love that loves to murder love.

MOSBIE

How mean you that?

ALICE

Thou knowest how dearly Arden loved me.

MOSBIE

And then?

ALICE

And then—conceal the rest, for 'tis too bad,
Lest that my words be carried with the wind,
And published in the world to both our shames.
I pray thee, Mosbie, let our springtime wither;
Our harvest else will yield but loathsome weeds.
Forget, I pray thee, what hath passed betwixt us,
For how I blush and tremble at the thoughts!

MOSBIE

What? are you changed?

ALICE

Ay, to my former happy life again,
From title of an odious strumpet's name
To honest Arden's wife, not Arden's honest wife.

Ha, Mosbie! 'tis thou hast rifled me of that
And made me slanderous to all my kin;
Even in my forehead is thy name ingraven,
A mean artificer, that low-born name.
I was bewitched: woe worth the hapless hour
And all the causes that enchanted me!

MOSBIE

Nay, if you ban, let me breathe curses forth
And if you stand so nicely at your fame,
Let me repent the credit I have lost.
I have neglected matters of import
That would have stated me above thy state,
Forslowed advantages, and spurned at time;
Ay, Fortune's right hand Mosbie hath forsook
To take a wanton giglot by the left.
I left the marriage of an honest maid,
Whose dowry would have weighed down all thy wealth,
Whose beauty and demeanour far exceeded thee:
This certain good I lost for changing bad,
And wrapt my credit in thy company.
I was bewitched,—that is no theme of thine,
And thou unhallowed has enchanted *me*.
But I will break thy spells and exorcisms,
And put another sight upon these eyes
That showed my heart a raven for a dove.
Thou art not fair, I viewed thee not till now;
Thou art not kind, till now I knew thee not;
And now the rain hath beaten off thy guilt,
Thy worthless copper shows thee counterfeit.
It grieves me not to see how foul thou art,
But mads me that I ever thought thee fair.

That neither horse nor man could be discerned?
Yet did we hear their horses as they passed.

Go, get thee gone, a copesmate for thy hinds;
I am too good to be thy favourite.

ALICE

MOSBIE

Have they escaped you, then, and passed the ferry?

SHAKEBAG

Zounds, I was ne'er so toiled in all my life
In following so slight a task as this.

MOSBIE

How cam'st thou so berayed?

WILL

With making false footing in the dark;

ALICE

Here's to pay for a fire and good cheer.

WILL

Ay, Mistress Arden, this will serve the turn,
In case we fall into a second fog.

ALICE

Go in, Black Will; call for a cup of ale,
And thou shalt stay with us till supper time.
If I call "murder," then return at once,
And bring your honest friend along with you.

WILL

Come, Shakebag,
We shall be hanged in Kent when all is done.

ALICE

Not hanged, God save the mark!
You are my bedesmen, bound to pray for me.

SHAKEBAG

He never said a prayer in all his life.

[BLACK WILL and SHAKEBAG
retire down the passage.]

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And made me slanderous to all my kin;
Even in my forehead is thy name ingraven,
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It grieves me not to see how foul thou art,
But mads me that I ever thought thee fair.

Go, get thee gone, a copesmate for thy hinds;
I am too good to be thy favourite.

ALICE

Ay, now I see, and too soon find it true,
Which often hath been told me by my friends,
That Mosbie loves me not but for my wealth,
Which too incredulous I ne'er believed.

[*MOSBIE puts on his hat to go.*]

Nay, hear me speak, Mosbie, a word or two;
I'll bite my tongue if it speak bitterly.
Look on me, Mosbie, or I'll kill myself:
Nothing shall hide me from thy stormy look.
If thou cry war, there is no peace for me;
I will do penance for offending thee,
And burn this prayer, where I here use
The holy word that had converted me.
See, Mosbie, I will tear away the leaves,
And all the leaves, and in this golden cover
Shall thy sweet phrases and thy letters dwell;
And thereon will I chiefly meditate,
And hold no other sect but such devotion.
Wilt thou not look? is all thy love o'erwhelmed?
Wilt thou not hear? what malice stops thine ears?
Why speaks thou not? what silence ties thy tongue?
Thou hast been sighted as the eagle is,
And heard as quickly as the fearful hare,
And spoke as smoothly as an orator,
When I have bid thee hear or see or speak,
And art thou sensible in none of these?
Weigh all thy good turns with this little fault,
And I deserve not Mosbie's muddy looks.

A fence of trouble is not thickened still:
Be clear again, I'll ne'er more trouble thee.

MOSBIE

Oh, no; I am a base artificer:
My wings are feathered for a lowly flight.
Mosbie? fie! no, not for a thousand pound.
Make love to you? why, 'tis unpardonable;
We beggars must not breathe where gentles are.

ALICE

Sweet Mosbie is as gentle as a king,
And I too blind to judge him otherwise.
Flowers do sometimes spring in fallow lands,
Weeds in gardens, roses grow on thorns;
So, whatsoe'er my Mosbie's father was,
Himself is valued gentle by his worth.

MOSBIE

Ah, how you women can insinuate,
And clear a trespass with your sweet-set tongue!
I will forget this quarrel, gentle Alice,
Provided I be tempted so no more.

BLACK WILL *and SHAKEBAG return by the porch door,*
their clothes covered with mud.

Black Will and Shakebag, what make you here?
What, is the deed done? is Arden dead?

WILL

What could a blinded man perform in arms?
Saw you not how till now the sky was dark,
That neither horse nor man could be discerned?
Yet did we hear their horses as they passed.

MOSBIE

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SHAKEBAG

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In following so slight a task as this.

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And bring your honest friend along with you.

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We shall be hanged in Kent when all is done.

ALICE

Not hanged, God save the mark!
You are my bedesmen, bound to pray for me.

SHAKEBAG

He never said a prayer in all his life.

[BLACK WILL and SHAKEBAG
retire down the passage.

MOSBIE

These knaves will never do it, let us give it over.

ALICE

Soon, when my husband is returning back,
Like loving friends we'll meet him on the way,
And boldly beard and brave him to his teeth.
When words grow hot and blows begin to rise,
I'll call these cutters forth our tenement,
Who, in a manner to take up the fray,
Shall wound my husband Hornsby to the death.

MOSBIE

A fine device! why, this deserves a kiss.

ALICE is leaning against the table and MOSBIE seated near her; as they embrace, FRANKLIN and ARDEN enter by the porch door.

FRANKLIN

Why, there's no better creatures in the world
Then women are when they are in good humours.

ARDEN

Humours, forsooth, that stifle like this fog!
Who is that? Mosbie? what, so familiar?
Injurious strumpet, and thou ribald knave,
Untwine those arms.

ALICE

Ay, with a sugared kiss let them untwine.

ARDEN

Ah, Mosbie! perjured beast! bear this and all!

MOSBIE

And yet no horned beast; the horns are thine.

FRANKLIN

Oh, monstrous! Nay, then it is time to draw.

ALICE

Help, help! they murder my husband.

WILL and SHAKEBAG return with drawn swords.

SHAKEBAG

Zounds, who injures Master Mosbie?

[There is a fight; FRANKLIN attacks WILL and SHAKEBAG, who run away at once, frightened; ARDEN disarms MOSBIE with his sword, wounding him.]

Help! Will! I am hurt.

MOSBIE

I may thank you, Mistress Arden, for this wound.

[MOSBIE goes out by the porch door.]

ALICE

Ah, Arden, what folly blinded thee?

Ah, jealous harebrained man, what hast thou done

When we, to welcome thee with intended sport,

Stood lovingly to greet thy coming home,

Thou drew'st thy sword, enraged with jealousy,

And hurt thy friend whose thoughts were free from
harm:

All for a worthless kiss and joining arms,

Both done but merrily to try thy patience.

And me unhappy that devised the jest,

Which, though begun in sport, yet ends in blood!

FRANKLIN

Marry, God defend me from such a jest!

ALICE

Could'st thou not see us friendly smile on thee,

When we joined arms, and when I kissed his cheek?
Hast thou not lately found me over-kind?
Did'st thou not hear me cry "they murder thee"?
Called I not help to set my husband free?
No, ears and all were witched; ah, me accursed
To link in liking with a frantic man!
Henceforth I'll be thy slave, no more thy wife,
For with that name I never shall content thee.
If I be merry, thou straightways thinks me light;
If sad, thou sayest the sullens trouble me;
If well attired, thou thinks I will be gadding;
If homely, I seem sluttish in thine eye:
Thus am I still, and shall be while I die.
Poor wench abused by thy misgovernment!

ARDEN

But is it for truth that neither thou nor he
Intendedst malice in your misdemeanour?

ALICE

The heavens can witness of our harmless thoughts.

ARDEN

Then pardon me, sweet Alice, and forgive this fault.
Forget but this and never see the like.
Impose me penance, and I will perform it,
For in thy discontent I find a death,—
A death tormenting more than death itself.

ALICE

Nay, had'st thou loved me as thou dost pretend,
Thou wouldst have marked the speeches of thy friend,
Who going wounded from the place, he said
His skin was pierced only through my device:

And if sad sorrow taint thee for this fault,
Thou wouldst have followed him, and seen him dressed,
And cried him mercy whom thou hast misdone;
Ne'er shall my heart be eased till this be done.

ARDEN

Content thee, sweet Alice, thou shalt have thy will,
Whate'er it be. For that I injured thee,
And wronged my friend, shame scourgeth my offence;
Come thou thyself, and go along with me,
And be a mediator 'twixt us two.

FRANKLIN

Why, Master Arden! know you what you do?
Will you follow him that hath dishonoured you?

ALICE

Why, canst thou prove that I have been disloyal?

FRANKLIN

Why, Mosbie taunted your husband with the like.

ALICE

Ay, after that he had reviled him
By the injurious name of perjured beast:
He knew no wrong could spite a jealous man
More than the hateful naming of the like.

FRANKLIN

Suppose 'tis true; yet is it dangerous
To follow him whom he hath lately hurt.

ALICE

A fault confessed is more than half amends;
But men of such ill spirit as yourself
Work crosses and debates 'twixt man and wife.

ARDEN

I pray thee, gentle Franklin, hold thy peace:
I know my wife doth counsel for the best.
I'll seek out Mosbie where his wound is dressed,
And salve this hapless quarrel if I may.

[ARDEN goes out by the porch door,
and ALICE retires by the staircase.]

FRANKLIN

He whom the devil drives must go perforce.
Poor gentleman, how soon he is bewitched!
And yet, because his wife is the instrument,
His friends must not be lavish in their speech.

FRANKLIN goes out by the porch door; BLACK WILL and
SHAKEBAG return with GREENE by the passage.

WILL

Sirrah Greene, when was I so long in killing a man?

GREENE

I think we shall never do it; let us give it over.

SHAKEBAG

Nay, Zounds! we'll kill him, though we be hanged at
his door for our labour.

WILL

Thou knowst, Greene, that I have lived in London this
twelve years, where I have made some go upon wooden
legs for taking the wall on me; divers with silver noses
for saying "There goes Black Will!" I have cracked as
many blades as thou hast nuts.

GREENE

Oh monstrous lie!

WILL

Faith, in a manner I have. For a cross word of a tapster I have pierced one barrel after another with my dagger, and held him by the ears till all his beer hath run out. In Thames Street a brewer's cart was like to have run over me: I made no more ado, but went to the clerk and cut all the notches of his tallies and beat them about his head. I and my company have taken the constable from his watch, and carried him about the fields on a coltstaff. I have broken a sergeant's head with his own mace, and bailed whom I list with my sword and buckler. All the tenpenny-alehouses-men would stand every morning with a quart pot in their hand, saying, "Will it please your worship drink?" He that had not done so, had been sure to have had his sign pulled down and his lattice borne away the next night. To conclude, what have I not done? yet cannot do this; doubtless, he is preserved by miracle.

ALICE returns by the staircase.

GREENE

Hence, Will! here comes Mistress Arden.

ALICE

Ah, gentlemen, how missed you of your purpose?

GREENE

'Twas 'long of Shakebag, that unlucky villain.

SHAKEBAG

Thou dost me wrong; I did as much as any.

WILL

Nay then, Mistress Arden, I'll tell you how it was:
When he should have locked with both his hilts,
He in a bravery flourished o'er his head;

With that comes Franklin at him lustily,
And hurts the slave; with that he slinks away.
Now his way had been to have come hand and feet, one
and two round, at his costard; he like a fool bears his
sword-point half a yard out of danger. [*He takes a position on guard.*] I lie here for my life; if the devil come,
and he have no more strength than I have fence, he shall
never beat me from *this* ward, I'll stand to it; a buckler
in a skilful hand is as good as a castle; nay, 't is better
than a sconce, for I have tried it.

Mosbie, perceiving this, began to faint:
With that comes Arden with his arming sword,
And thrust him through the shoulder in a trice.

ALICE

Ay, but I wonder why you both stood still.

WILL

Faith, I was so amazed, I could not strike.

MOSBIE *returns by the porch door, his arm is in a sling.*

ALICE

Sweet Mosbie, hide thy arm, it kills my heart.

MOSBIE

Ay, Mistress Arden, this is your favour.

ALICE

Ah, say not so; for when I saw thee hurt,
I could have took the weapon thou let'st fall,
And run at Arden.

MOSBIE

Then had we been undone.

ALICE

Why, how long shall he live?

MOSBIE

Faith, Alice, no longer than this night.—
You, Master Greene, shall single Franklin forth,
And hold him with a long tale of strange news,
That he may not come home till supper-time.
I'll fetch Master Arden home, and we like friends
Will play a game or two at tables here.

ALICE

But what of all this?

MOSBIE

Shakebag and Will behind that passage door
Shall at a certain watchword given rush forth.

WILL

What shall the watchword be?

MOSBIE

"Now I take you;" that shall be the word:
But come not forth before in any case.

WILL

I warrant you. But who shall lock me in?

ALICE

That will I do.

MOSBIE

Come, Master Greene, go you along with me.
See all things ready, Alice, against we come.

ALICE

Take no care for that; send you him home.

[*MOSBIE and GREENE go out by the porch door.*
How like you this? say, will you do it, sirs?

WILL

Ay, and that bravely, too. Mark my device:
Place Mosbie, being a stranger, in a chair,
And let your husband sit upon a stool,
That I may come behind him cunningly,
And with a towel pull him to the ground.
That done, bear him behind the Abbey,
That those that find him murdered may suppose
Some slave or other killed him for his gold.

ALICE

A fine device! you shall have twenty pound.

WILL

Give me the key that locks this passage door.

ALICE

Here would I stay and still encourage you;
But that I know how resolute you are.

SHAKEBAG

Tush, you are too faint-hearted; we must do it.

ALICE

But Mosbie will be there, whose very looks
Will add unwonted courage to my thought.

WILL

Tush, get you gone; 'tis we must do the deed.
When this door opens next, look for his death.

WILL and SHAKEBAG retire; MICHAEL returns by the porch door; SUSAN enters to prepare the table for supper.

MICHAEL

Mistress, my master is coming hard by.

ALICE

Who comes with him?

MICHAEL

Nobody but Mosbie.

ALICE

That's well, Michael. Fetch in the tables, and when thou hast done, stand before the passage door.

MICHAEL

Why so?

ALICE

Black Will is locked within to do the deed.

MICHAEL

What? shall he die to-night?

ALICE

Ay, Michael.

MICHAEL

But shall not Susan know it?

ALICE

Yes, for she'll be as secret as ourselves.

MICHAEL

That's brave. I'll go fetch the tables.

ALICE

But, Michael,

When my husband is come in, lock the street-door;

ARDEN *returns with* MOSBIE.

Husband, what mean you to bring Mosbie home?

Although I wished you to be reconciled,
'Twas more for fear of you than love of him.

MOSBIE

Master Arden, methinks your wife would have me gone.

ARDEN

No, good Master Mosbie; women will be prating.
Alice, bid him welcome; he and I are friends.

ALICE

But I had rather die than bid him welcome.

MOSBIE [*aside*]

Oh, how cunningly she can dissemble!

ARDEN

Now he is here, you will not serve me so.

MOSBIE

Pardon me, Master Arden; I'll away.

ARDEN

No, good Master Mosbie.

ALICE

We shall have guests enough, though you go hence.

MOSBIE

I pray you, Master Arden, let me go.

ARDEN

I pray thee, Mosbie, let her prate her fill.

ALICE

The doors are open, sir, you may be gone.

MICHAEL [*aside*]

Nay, that's a lie, for I have locked the doors.

ARDEN

Sirrah, fetch me a cup of wine, I'll make them friends.
Frown not, I'll have it so.

ALICE

I pray you meddle with that you have to do.

ARDEN

Why, Alice! how can I do too much for him
Whose life I have endangered without cause?

ALICE

'Tis true; and, seeing 'twas partly through my means,
I am content for once to drink to him.
Here, Master Mosbie! and I pray you, henceforth
Be you as strange to me as I to you.
Your company hath purchased me ill friends.

MOSBIE

Now, Arden, I protest to thee by heaven,
Thou ne'er shalt see me more after this night.

ARDEN

Tush, I'll have no such vows made in my house.

ALICE

Yes, I pray you, husband, let him swear;
And, on that condition, Mosbie, pledge me here.

MOSBIE

Ay, as willingly as I mean to live.

ARDEN

Come, Alice, is our supper ready yet?

ALICE

Ay! when you have a game at tables played.

ARDEN

Come, Master Mosbie, what shall we play for?

MOSBIE

Three games for a French crown, sir, and please you.

ARDEN

Content.

They go to a small table on the left of the stage and play tables on a draught-board with counters and dice. MOSBIE is in the armchair and ARDEN sits on a stool. WILL and SHAKEBAG appear at the back. WILL has a towel in his hand.

WILL

—Can he not take him yet? what a spite is that?

ALICE

—Not yet, Will; take heed he see thee not.

WILL

—I fear he will spy me as I am coming.

SHAKEBAG

—To prevent that, creep betwixt my legs.

MOSBIE

One ace, or else I lose the game.

ARDEN

Marry, sir, there's two for failing.

MOSBIE

Ah, Master Arden, "now I can take you."

[WILL, by means of the towel held in both hands, like a noose, pulls ARDEN off the stool.]

ARDEN

Mosbie! Michael! Alice! what will you do?

WILL

Nothing but take you up, sir, nothing else.

MOSBIE

There's for the pressing iron you told me of.

[Stabs him.]

SHAKEBAG

And there's for the ten pound in my sleeve. *[Stabs him.]*

ALICE

What! groans thou? nay, then give me the weapon!

Take this for hindering Mosbie's love and mine.

[She stabs him.]

MICHAEL

O, mistress!

WILL

Ah, that villain will betray us all.

MOSBIE

Tush, fear him not; he will be secret.

MICHAEL

Why, dost thou think I will betray myself?

WILL

Shift for yourselves; we two will leave you now.

ALICE

But first convey the body to the fields,

And throw the knife and towel down the well.

SHAKEBAG

We have our gold; Mistress Alice, adieu;
Mosbie, farewell, and Michael, farewell too.

*[The body is carried out down the passage by WILL,
SHAKEBAG, and MICHAEL; ALICE and SUSAN
tidy the room. Knocking is heard at the porch door.]*

SUSAN

Mistress, the guests are at the door.
Hearken, they knock: what, shall I let them in?

ALICE

Mosbie, go thou and bear them company.
[MOSBIE goes to porch door.]
Susan, some water here upon this blood.

SUSAN

The blood cleaveth to the ground and will not out.

ALICE

The more you strive, the more the blood appears!

SUSAN

What's the reason, mistress, can you tell?

ALICE

Because I blush not at my husband's death.

MOSBIE returns.

MOSBIE

How now? what's the matter? is all well?

ALICE

Ay, well, if Arden were alive again.
In vain we strive, for here his blood remains.

MOSBIE

Why, strew rushes on it, can you not?
This wench doth nothing: fall unto the work.

ALICE

'Twas thou that made me murder him.

MOSBIE

What of that?

ALICE

Nay, nothing, Mosbie, so it be not known.

MOSBIE

Keep thou it close, and 'tis impossible.

ALICE

Ah, but I cannot! was he not slain by me?
My husband's death torments me at the heart.

MOSBIE

It shall not long torment thee, gentle Alice;
I am thy husband, think no more of him.

GREENE *enters with* CLARKE *and* BRADSHAW.

GREENE

Now, Mistress Arden, lack you any guests?

ALICE

Ah, Master Greene, did you see my husband lately?

GREENE

I saw him walking behind the Abbey even now.

FRANKLIN *enters*.

ALICE

I do not like this being out so late—
Master Franklin, where did you leave my husband?

FRANKLIN

Fear you not, he'll come anon; meantime
You may do well to bid his guests sit down.

ALICE

Ay, so they shall; Master Bradshaw, sit you there;
I pray you, be content, I'll have my will.
Master Mosbie, sit you in my husband's seat.

*[All sit: the stool on which ARDEN sat is still
vacant near the centre of the stage, ALICE be-
ing afraid to touch it or to seat any one upon it.]*

MOSBIE

Sirrah Michael, give us some cups.

MICHAEL

Susan, shall you or I wait on them?

SUSAN

Peace, we have other matters now in hand.

MOSBIE

Mistress Arden, here's to your husband.

ALICE

My husband!

FRANKLIN

What ails you, woman, to cry so suddenly.

ALICE

Ah, neighbours, a sudden qualm came o'er my heart;
My husband being forth torments my mind.
I know something's amiss, he is not well;
Or else I should have heard of him ere now.

MOSBIE

—She will undo us through her foolishness.

GREENE

Fear not, Mistress Arden, he's well enough.

ALICE

Tell not me; I know he is not well:

He was not wont for to stay thus late.

Good Master Franklin, go and seek him forth,

And if you find him, send him home to me,

And tell him what a fear he hath put me in.

FRANKLIN

I like not this; I pray God all be well.

[FRANKLIN goes out.]

ALICE [*to guests*]

Ah, gentlemen, take pity on my fears!

And sweetly lend thy aid to seek for him.

GUESTS

Ay, that we will!

ALICE

Good Michael, light them forth and lend a link.

[MICHAEL, GREENE, and the two guests
retire by the porch door. ALICE and MOSBIE
look at each other. There is a moment's silence.]

ALICE

Sweet Mosbie,

I have my wish in that I joy thy sight—

But it behoves us to be circumspect.

MOSBIE

Ay, for Franklin thinks that we have murdered him.

ALICE

Ay, but he cannot prove it for his life.

MICHAEL *and* GREENE *return.*

MICHAEL

O mistress, the Mayor and all the watch
Are coming towards our house with glaives and bills.

MOSBIE

Tell me, sweet Alice, how shall I escape?

ALICE

Out at the back-door, over the pile of wood,
And for one night lie at the Flower-de-luce.

MOSBIE

That is the next way to betray myself.

GREENE

Alas, Mistress Arden, the watch will take me too,
And cause suspicion, where else would be none.

ALICE

Why, take that way that Master Mosbie doth;

MOSBIE

Until to-morrow, sweet Alice, now farewell:
And see you confess nothing in any case.

GREENE

Be resolute, Mistress Alice, betray us not,
But cleave to us as we will stick to you.

[*MOSBIE and GREENE go out by the passage.*]

ALICE

Now let the judge and juries do their worst:
My house is clear, and now I fear them not.

SUSAN

As they went, it snowed all the way,
Which makes me fear their footsteps will be spied.

ALICE

Peace, fool, the snow will cover them again.

SUSAN

But it had done before they did come back.

ALICE

Hark, hark, they knock! Go, Michael, let them in.

The MAYOR and the WATCH enter.

How now, Master Mayor, have you brought my husband home?

MAYOR

I saw him come into your house an hour ago.

ALICE

You are deceived; it was a Londoner.

MAYOR

Mistress Arden, know you not one that is called Black Will?

ALICE

I know none such: what mean these questions?

MAYOR

I have the Council's warrant to apprehend him.

ALICE

—I am glad it is no worse.

Why, Master Mayor, think you I harbour any such?

MAYOR

We are informed that here he is;
And therefore pardon us, for we must search.

ALICE

Ay, search, and spare you not, through every room:
Were my husband at home, you would not offer this.

*Some of the WATCH go down the passage: FRANKLIN
returns by the porch door.*

Master Franklin, what mean you come so sad?

FRANKLIN

Arden, thy husband and my friend, is slain.

ALICE

Ah, by whom? Master Franklin, can you tell?

FRANKLIN

I know not. But behind the Abbey
There he lies murdered in most piteous case.

MAYOR

But, Master Franklin, are you sure 'tis he?

FRANKLIN

I am too sure; would God I were deceived.

ALICE

Find out the murderers, let them be known.

FRANKLIN

Ay, so they shall: come you along with us.

ALICE

Wherefore?

FRANKLIN

Know you this hand-towel and this knife?

SUSAN

—Ah, Michael, through this thy negligence
Thou hast betrayed and undone us all.

MICHAEL

—I was so afraid I knew not what I did:
I thought I had thrown them both into the well.

ALICE

But wherefore stay you? find out the murderers.

MAYOR

I fear me you'll prove one of them yourself.

ALICE

I one of them? What mean such questions?

FRANKLIN

I fear me he was murdered in this house
And carried to the fields; for from that place
Backwards and forwards may you see
The print of many feet within the snow.
And look about this chamber where we are,
And you shall find part of his guiltless blood;
For in his slipshoe did I find some rushes,
Which argueth he was murdered in this room.

MAYOR

Look in the place where he was wont to sit.
See, see! his blood! It is too manifest.

ALICE

It is a cup of wine that Michael shed.

MICHAEL

Ay, truly.

FRANKLIN

It is his blood, which, strumpet, thou has shed.

But if I live, thou and thy 'complices

Which have conspired and wrought his death shall rue it.

MOSBIE and GREENE are brought in prisoners.

MAYOR

Confess this foul fault and be penitent.

ALICE

Forgive me, Arden: I repent me now,

And, would my death save thine, thou should'st not die.

MAYOR

Say, Mosbie, what made thee murder him?

FRANKLIN

Study not for an answer; look not down.

MOSBIE

I hired Black Will and Shakebag, ruffians both,

And they and I have done this murderous deed.

Convey me from the presence of that strumpet.

ALICE

Ah, but for thee I had never been a strumpet.

MAYOR

Leave to accuse each other now,

And listen to the sentence I shall give.

Bear Mosbie and his sister to London straight,

Bear Mistress Arden unto Canterbury.

ALICE

Let my death make amends for all my sins.

MOSBIE

Fie upon women! this shall be my song;
But bear me hence, for I have lived too long.

MAYOR

To speedy execution with them all!

[The prisoners are led out by the porch door.]

CURTAIN

LOVE'S CONSTANCY

An Episode

IN THE PLAY OF

"EDWARD THE THIRD"

∴

ARRANGED IN ONE ACT

BY

WILLIAM POEL

DIRECTOR OF THE ELIZABETHAN

STAGE SOCIETY

CHARACTERS

EDWARD THE THIRD. *King of England.*

EDWARD, PRINCE OF WALES, *his Son.*

EARL OF WARWICK.

EARL OF DERBY.

LORD AUDLEY.

LODWICK, *Edward's Secretary.*

COUNTESS OF SALISBURY.

ATTENDANT ON THE COUNTESS.

LORDS, HERALDS, OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, &c.

SCENE: *Roxburgh; Gardens of the Castle.*

PERIOD, 1335.

*First performed by the Elizabethan Stage Society at
St. George's Hall, Langham Place, London, on July 9,
1897, with the following cast:*

KING EDWARD	<i>Mr. F. Rawson Buckley.</i>
PRINCE OF WALES	<i>Miss Muriel Ashwynne.</i>
WARWICK	<i>Mr. Ernest Meads.</i>
DERBY	<i>Mr. Percy Varley.</i>
AUDLEY	<i>Mr. Davidson.</i>
LODWICK	<i>Mr. Fowler.</i>
LADY SALISBURY	<i>Miss Riddell.</i>
ATTENDANT	<i>Mr. Cockerell.</i>

The play produced under the direction of
MR. WILLIAM POEL.

LOVE'S CONSTANCY



SCENE

THE gardens of Roxburgh Castle; a terrace in the background overlooking the Walls. An entrance to the apartments of the castle on the left; a stone seat and table on the right, shadowed by an oak-tree and shrubs; a sundial in the centre of the greensward.

Before the curtain rises, a trumpet-call is heard, followed by a roll on the drum in the distance; then the sound of chains as if the drawbridge was being lowered. The COUNTESS OF SALISBURY is discovered alone on the terrace, looking over the Walls into the plain below. Her attendants are standing on the left, near the entrance to the apartments.

COUNT.

O happy comfort, welcome to our house!

The confident and boist'rous boasting Scot,—

That swore before my walls, they would not back

For all the armed power of this land,—

With faceless fear that ever turns his back,

Turn'd hence against the blasting north-east wind

Upon the bare report and name of arms.

Enter a messenger attended. The drum and trumpet are again heard in the distance.

O summer's day! see where my kinsmen come.

Well may I give a welcome, sir, to thee,

For thou com'st well to chase my foes from hence.

MESS.

The king himself is come in person hither;
Dear madam, prepare to gratulate his highness.

COUNT.

How may I entertain his majesty,
To show my duty and his dignity?

Some attendants join the COUNTESS on the terrace. A flourish, and then enter from the right KING EDWARD, WARWICK, ARTOIS, LODWICK, and attendants.

K. ED.

What, are the stealing foxes fled and gone
Before we could uncouple at their heels?

WAR.

They are, my liege; but, with a cheerful cry,
Hot hounds and hardy chase them at the heels.

K. ED.

That is the countess, Warwick, is it not?

WAR.

Even she, my liege; whose beauty tyrant's fear,
As a May blossom with pernicious winds,
Hath sullied, wither'd, overcast, and done.

K. ED.

Hath she been fairer, Warwick, than she is?

WAR.

My gracious king, fair is she not at all,
If that herself were by to stain herself,
As I have seen her when she was herself.

K. ED.

What strange enchantment lurk'd in those her eyes
When they excell'd this excellence they have,
That now their dim decline hath power to draw
My subject eyes from piercing majesty
To gaze on her with doting admiration?

COUNTESS *comes forward, followed by her attendants.*

COUNT.

In duty lower than the ground I kneel,
And for my dull knees bow my feeling heart,
To witness my obedience to your highness;
With many millions of a subject's thanks
For this your royal presence, whose approach
Hath driven war and danger from my gate.

K. ED.

Lady, stand up: I come to bring thee peace,
However thereby I have purchas'd war.

COUNT.

No war to you, my liege; the Scots are gone,
And gallop home toward Scotland with their hate.

K. ED. [*aside*]

Lest yielding here I pine in shameful love,
Come, we'll pursue the Scots;—Artois, away!

*[The drum and trumpet are
again heard in the distance.]*

COUNT.

A little while, my gracious sovereign, stay,
And let the power of a mighty king
Honour our roof; my husband in the wars,
When he shall hear it, will triumph for joy:

Then, dear my liege, now niggard not thy state;
Being at the wall, enter our homely gate.

K. ED.

Pardon me, countess, I will come no near;
I dream'd to-night of treason, and I fear.

COUNT.

Far from this place let ugly treason lie!

K. ED. [*aside*]

No farther off than her conspiring eye,
Which shoots infected poison in my heart
Beyond repulse of wit or cure of art.
Now in the sun alone it doth not lie
With light to take light from a mortal eye;
For here two day-stars, that mine eyes would see,
More than the sun, steals mine own light from me.
Contemplative desire! desire to be
In contemplation, that may master thee!
Warwick, Artois, to horse, and let's away!

[*The drum and trumpet repeated, and growing fainter.*]

COUNT.

What might I speak, to make my sovereign stay?

K. ED.

What needs a tongue to such a speaking eye
That more persuades than winning oratory?

COUNT.

Let not thy presence, like the April sun,
Flatter our earth and suddenly be done.
More happy do not make our outward wall
Than thou wilt grace our inner house withal.

Our house, my liege, is like a country swain,
 Whose habit rude and manners blunt and plain
 Presageth nought, yet inly beautified
 With bounty's riches and fair hidden pride:
 For, where the golden ore doth buried lie,
 The ground, undeck'd with nature's tapestry,
 Seems barren, sere, unfertile, fruitless, dry;
 And where the upper turf of earth doth boast
 His pride, perfumes and parti-colour'd cost,
 Delve there, and find this issue and their pride
 To spring from ordure and corruption's side.
 But, to make up my all too long compare,
 These ragged walls no testimony are
 What is within; but, like a cloak, doth hide,
 From weather's waste, the under-garnish'd pride.
 More gracious than my terms can let them be,
 Intreat thyself to stay a while with me.

K. ED. [*aside*]

As wise as fair; what fond fit can be heard
 When wisdom keeps the gate as beauty's guard?—
 Countess, albeit my business urgeth me,
 It shall attend while I attend on thee.—
 Come on, my lords, here will I host to-night.

[The drum and trumpet continue growing fainter until their sound dies away; then, from the apartments of the castle, is heard a pleasant melody from stringed instruments; the KING leads the COUNTESS into the castle, followed by all the attendants but LODWICK.]

LOD.

I might perceive his eye in her eye lost,
 His ear to drink her sweet tongue's utterance;

And changing passion, like inconstant clouds
That rack upon the carriage of the winds,
Increase and die in his disturbèd cheeks.
Lo, when she blush'd, even then did he look pale,
As if her cheeks, by some enchanted power,
Attracted had the cherry blood from his:
Anon, with reverent fear when she grew pale,
His cheeks put on their scarlet ornaments,
But no more like her oriental red,
Than brick to coral or live things to dead.
Why did he then thus counterfeit her looks?
If she did blush, 'twas tender modest shame,
Being in the sacred presence of a king;
If he did blush, 'twas red immodest shame,
To veil his eyes amiss, being a king:
If she look'd pale, 'twas silly woman's fear,
To bear herself in presence of a king;
If he look'd pale, it was with guilty fear,
To dote amiss, being a mighty king:
Then, Scottish wars, farewell! I fear, 't will prove
A ling'ring English siege of peevish love.

The music ceases. Enter KING EDWARD.

K. ED.

She is grown more fairer far since I came hither;
Her voice more silver every word than other,
Her wit more fluent: what a strange discourse
Unfolded she of David and his Scots!
"Even thus," quoth she, "he spake,"—and then spoke
broad,
With epithets and accents of the Scot;
But somewhat better than the Scot could speak:
"And thus," quoth she—and answer'd then herself;

For who could speak like her? but she herself
Breathes from the wall an angel's note from heaven
Of sweet defiance to her barbarous foes.
When she would talk of peace, methinks, her tongue
Commanded war to prison; when of war,
It waken'd Cæsar from his Roman grave,
To hear war beautified by her discourse.
Wisdom is foolishness, but in her tongue,
Beauty a slander, but in her fair face:
There is no summer, but in her cheerful looks,
Nor frosty winter, but in her disdain.
I cannot blame the Scots that did besiege her,
For she is all the treasure of our land;
But call them cowards, that they ran away,
Having so rich and fair a cause to stay. —
Art thou there, Lodwick? give me ink and paper.

Lod.

I will, my sovereign.

K. Ed.

And bid the lords forbear to visit me,
For we will walk and meditate alone.

Lod.

I will, my liege.

Lodwick enters the castle.

K. Ed.

This fellow is well read in poetry
And hath a lusty and persuasive spirit:
I will acquaint him with my passion;
Which he shall shadow with a veil of lawn,

Through which the queen of beauty's queens shall see
Herself the ground of my infirmity.—

Re-enter LODWICK.

Hast thou pen, ink, and paper ready, Lodwick?

LOD.

Ready, my liege.

K. ED.

Then in the summer arbour sit by me,
Make it our council-house, or cabinet;
Since green our thoughts, green be the conventicle
Where we will ease us by disburd'ning them.
Now, Lodwick, invoke some golden muse
To bring thee hither an enchanted pen
That may, for sighs, set down true sighs indeed;
Talking of grief, to make thee ready groan;
And, when thou writ'st of tears, encouch the word,
Before and after, with such sweet laments,
That it may raise drops in a Tartar's eye,
And make a flint-heart Scythian pitiful:
For so much moving hath a poet's pen;
Then, if thou be a poet, move thou so,
And be enrichèd by thy sovereign's love.
For, if the touch of sweet concordant strings
Could force attendance in the ears of hell;
How much more shall the strains of poet's wit
Beguile and ravish soft and human minds?

LOD.

To whom, my lord, shall I direct my style?

K. ED.

To one that shames the fair and sots the wise;

Whose body is an abstract or a brief,
 Contains each general virtue in the world.
 Better than beautiful, thou must begin;
 Devise for fair a fairer word than fair;
 And every ornament, that thou wouldst praise
 Fly it a pitch above the soar of praise:
 For flattery fear thou not to be convicted;
 For, were thy admiration ten times more,
 Ten times ten thousand more the worth exceeds,
 Of that thou art to praise, thy praise's worth.
 Begin, I will to contemplate the while:
 Forget not to set down, how passionate,
 How heart-sick, and how full of languishment,
 Her beauty makes me.

LORD.

Write I to a woman?

K. ED.

What beauty else could triumph over me;
 Or who, but women, do our love-lays greet?
 What, think'st thou I did bid thee praise a horse?

LORD.

Of what condition or estate she is,
 'Twere requisite that I should know, my lord.

K. ED.

Of such estate, that hers is as a throne,
 And my estate the footstool where she treads:
 Then may'st thou judge what her condition is,
 By the proportion of her mightiness.
 Write on, while I peruse her in my thoughts.

*[Soft music is again heard
 coming from the apartments.]*

Her voice to music, or the nightingale:
To music every summer-leaping swain
Compares his sun-burnt lover when she speaks:
And why should I speak of the nightingale?
The nightingale sings of adulterate wrong;
And that, compar'd, is too satirical:
For sin, though sin, would not be so esteem'd;
But, rather, virtue sin, sin virtue deem'd.
Her hair, far softer than the silkworm's twist,
Like to a flattering glass, doth make more fair
The yellow amber: "like a flattering glass"
Comes in too soon; for, writing of her eyes,
I'll say, that like a glass they catch the sun,
And thence the hot reflection doth rebound
Against my breast, and burns my heart within.
Ah, what a world of descant makes my soul
Upon this voluntary ground of love!— [*Music ceases.*]
Come, Lodwick, hast thou turn'd thy ink to gold?
If not, write but in letters capital
My mistress' name, and it will gild thy paper.
Read, Lodwick, read;
Fill thou the empty hollows of mine ears
With the sweet hearing of thy poetry.

Lod.

I have not to a period brought her praise.

K. Ed.

Her praise is as my love, both infinite,
Which apprehend such violent extremes
That they disdain an ending period.
Her beauty hath no match but my affection;
Hers more than most, mine most, and more than more:

Hers more to praise than tell the sea by drops;
 Nay, more, than drop the massy earth by sands,
 And, sand by sand, print them in memory:
 Then wherefore talk'st thou of a period,
 To that which craves unended admiration?
 Read, let us hear.

Lod.

"More fair and chaste than is the queen of shades,"—

K. Ed.

That line hath two faults, gross and palpable:
 Compar'st thou her to the pale queen of night,
 Who, being set in dark, seems therefore light?
 What is she, when the sun lifts up his head,
 But like a fading taper, dim and dead?
 My love shall brave the eye of heaven at noon,
 And, being unmask'd, outshine the golden sun.

Lod.

What is the other fault, my sovereign lord?

K. Ed.

Read o'er the line again.

Lod.

"More fair and chaste,"—

K. Ed.

I did not bid thee talk of chastity,
 To ransack so the treasure of her mind;
 For I had rather have her chas'd, than chaste.
 Out with the moon-line, I will none of it,
 And let me have her liken'd to the sun:
 Say, she hath thrice more splendour than the sun,

That her perfections emulates the sun,
That she breeds sweets as plenteous as the sun,
That she doth thaw cold winter like the sun,
That she doth cheer fresh summer like the sun,
That she doth dazzle gazers like the sun:
And, in this application to the sun,
Bid her be free and general as the sun;
Who smiles upon the basest weed that grows,
As lovingly as on the fragrant rose.
Let's see what follows that same moon-light line.

Lod.

"More fair and chaste than is the queen of shades;
More bold in constancy"—

K. Ed.

In constancy! than who?

Lod.

—"than Judith was."

K. Ed.

O monstrous line! Put in the next a sword,
And I shall woo her to cut off my head.
Blot, blot, good Lodwick! Let us hear the next.

Lod.

There's all that yet is done.

K. Ed.

I thank thee then, thou hast done little ill;
But what is done, is passing passing ill.
No, let the captain talk of boist'rous war;
The prisoner, of immured dark constraint;
The sick man best sets down the pangs of death;

The man that starves, the sweetness of a feast;
The frozen soul, the benefit of fire;
And every grief, his happy opposite.

[*Soft music begins again.*

Love cannot sound well, but in lovers' tongues;
Give me the pen and paper, I will write.—

Enter COUNTESS *with* WARWICK *and attendants, who remain near the door.*

But soft, here comes the treasurer of my spirit.—
Lodwick, thou know'st not how to draw a battle;
These wings, these flankers, and these squadrons
Argue in thee defective discipline:
Thou shouldst have plac'd this here, this other here.

COUNT.

Pardon my boldness, my thrice-gracious lord;
Let my intrusion here be call'd my duty,
That comes to see my sovereign how he fares.

K. ED.

Go, draw the same, I tell thee in what form.

LOD.

I go. [Lodwick retires to the terrace: music ceases.]

COUNT.

Sorry I am, to see my liege so sad:
What may thy subject do, to drive from thee
Thy gloomy consort, sullen melancholy?

K. ED.

Ah, lady, I am blunt, and cannot strew
The flowers of solace, in a ground of shame:
Since I came hither, countess, I am wrong'd.

COUNT.

Now, God forbid, that any in my house
Should think my sovereign wrong! Thrice-gentle king,
Acquaint me with your cause of discontent.

K. ED.

How near then shall I be to remedy?

COUNT.

As near, my liege, as all my woman's power
Can pawn itself to buy thy remedy.

K. ED.

If thou speak'st true, then have I my redress:
Engage thy power to redeem my joys,
And I am joyful, countess; else, I die.

COUNT.

I will, my liege.

K. ED.

Swear, countess, that thou wilt.

COUNT.

By Heaven, I will.

K. ED.

Then take thyself a little way aside,
And tell thyself, a king doth dote on thee:
Say that within thy power it doth lie
To make him happy, and that thou hast sworn
To give him all the joy within thy power:
Do this; and tell me, when I shall be happy.

COUNT.

All this is done, my thrice-dread sovereign:
That power of love, that I have power to give,

Thou hast with all devout obedience;
Employ me how thou wilt in proof thereof.

K. ED.

Thou hear'st me say, that I do dote on thee.

COUNT.

If on my beauty, take it if thou canst;
Though little, I do prize it ten times less:
If on my virtue, take it if thou canst;
For virtue's store by giving doth augment:
Be it on what it will, that I can give
And thou canst take away, inherit it.

K. ED.

It is thy beauty that I would enjoy.

COUNT.

O, were it painted, I would wipe it off
And dispossess myself, to give it thee.
But, sovereign, it is solder'd to my life;
Take one, and both; for, like an humble shadow,
It haunts the sunshine of my summer's life.

K. ED.

But thou may'st lend it me.

COUNT.

As easy may my intellectual soul
Be lent away, and yet my body live,
As lend my body, palace to my soul,
Away from her, and yet retain my soul.
If I should lend her house, my lord, to thee,
I kill my poor soul, and my poor soul me.

K. ED.

Didst thou not swear, to give me what I would?

COUNT.

I did, my liege; so, what you would, I could.

K. ED.

I wish no more of thee than thou may'st give,
Nor beg I do not, but I rather buy;
That is, thy love; and, for that love of thine,
In rich exchange, I tender to thee mine.

COUNT.

But that your lips were sacred, O my lord!
You would profane the holy name of love.
That love, you offer me, you cannot give,
For Cæsar owes that tribute to his queen:
That love, you beg of me, I cannot give,
For Sara owes that duty to her lord.
He that doth clip or counterfeit your stamp
Shall die, my lord: and will your sacred self
Commit high treason against the King of Heaven,
To stamp his image in forbidden metal,
Forgetting your allegiance or your oath?
In violating marriage' sacred law,
You break a greater honour than yourself:
To be a king, is of a younger house
Than to be married; your progenitor,
Sole-reigning Adam on the universe,
By God was honour'd for a married man,
But not by him anointed for a king.
It is a penalty to break your statutes,
Though not enacted with your highness' hand:

How much more, to infringe the holy act
Made by the mouth of God, seal'd with his hand?
I know, my sovereign—in my husband's love,
Who now doth loyal service in his wars—
Doth but to try the wife of Salisbury,
Whether she will hear a wanton's tale, or no;
Lest being therein guilty by my stay,
From that, not from my liege, I turn away.

[COUNTESS joins WARWICK and her attendants and retires with them to the terrace.]

K. ED.

Whether is her beauty by her words divine,
Or are her words sweet chaplains to her beauty?
Like as the wind doth beautify a sail,
And as a sail becomes the unseen wind,
So do her words her beauty, beauty words.
O, that I were a honey-gathering bee,
To bear the comb of virtue from his flower;
And not a poison-sucking envious spider,
To turn the juice I take to deadly venom!
Religion is austere, and beauty gentle;
Too strict a guardian for so fair a ward.
O, that she were, as is the air, to me!
Why, so she is; for, when I would embrace her,
This do I, and catch nothing but myself.
I must possess her; for I cannot beat,
With reason and reproof, fond love away.

WARWICK comes from the terrace.

Here comes her father: I will work with him,
To bear my colours in this field of love.

WAR.

How is it, that my sovereign is so sad?
May I with pardon know your highness' grief,
And that my old endeavour will remove it,
It shall not cumber long your majesty.

K. ED.

A kind and voluntary gift thou proffer'st,
That I was forward to have begg'd of thee.
But, O thou world, great nurse of flattery,
Why dost thou tip men's tongues with golden words
And peise their deeds with weight of heavy lead,
That fair performance cannot follow promise?
O, that a man might hold the heart's close book,
And choke the lavish tongue when it doth utter
The breath of falsehood not character'd there!

WAR.

Far be it from the honour of my age
That I should owe bright gold and render lead!
Age is a cynic, not a flatterer:
I say again, that, if I knew your grief,
And that by me it may be lessened,
My proper harm should buy your highness' good.

K. ED.

These are the vulgar tenders of false men,
That never pay the duty of their words.
Thou wilt not stick to swear what thou hast said;
But, when thou know'st my grief's condition,
This rash-disgorgèd vomit of thy word
Thou wilt eat up again, and leave me helpless.

WAR.

By Heaven, I will not, though your majesty
Did bid me run upon your sword and die.

K. ED.

Say, that my grief is no way med'cinable,
But by the loss and bruising of thine honour?

WAR.

If nothing but that loss may vantage you,
I would account that loss my vantage too.

K. ED.

Think'st that thou canst unswear thy oath again?

WAR.

I cannot; nor I would not, if I could.

K. ED.

But, if thou dost, what shall I say to thee?

WAR.

What may be said to any perjur'd villain
That breaks the sacred warrant of an oath.

K. ED.

What wilt thou say to one that breaks an oath?

WAR.

That he hath broke his faith with God and man
And from them both stands excommunicate.

K. ED.

What office were it to suggest a man
To break a lawful and religious vow?

WAR.

An office for the devil, not for man.

K. ED.

That devil's office must thou do for me;
Or break thy oath and cancel all the bonds
Of love and duty 'twixt thyself and me.
And therefore, Warwick, if thou art thyself,
The lord and master of thy word and oath,
Go to thy daughter, and in my behalf
Command her, woo her, win her any ways,
To be my mistress and my secret love.
I will not stand to hear thee make reply;
Thy oath break hers, or let thy sovereign die.

[*The KING goes into the castle.*]

WAR.

O doting king! O detestable office!
Well may I tempt myself to wrong myself,
When he hath sworn me by the name of God
To break a vow made by the name of God.
What if I swear by this right hand of mine
To cut this right hand off? the better way
Were to profane the idol than confound it:
But neither will I do; I'll keep mine oath,
And to my daughter make a recantation
Of all the virtue I have preach'd to her.
I'll say, she must forget her husband Salisbüry,
If she remember to embrace the king;
I'll say, an oath may easily be broken,
But not so easily pardon'd, being broken;
I'll say, it is true charity to love,
But not true love to be so charitable;
I'll say, his greatness may bear out the shame,
But not his kingdom can buy out the sin;

I'll say, it is my duty to persuade,
But not her honesty to give consent.

COUNTESS *comes from the terrace.*

See, where she comes: was never father, had
Against his child an embassy so bad.

COUNT.

My lord and father, I have sought for you:
My mother and the peers importune you
To keep in presence of his majesty
And do your best to make his highness merry.

WAR. [*aside*]

How shall I enter in this arrant errand?
I must not call her child; for where's the father
That will, in such a suit, seduce his child?
Then, Wife of Salisbury,—shall I so begin?
No, he's my friend; and where is found the friend,
That will do friendship such endamage?—
[*To the COUNTESS.*] Neither my daughter, nor my dear
friend's wife,

I am not Warwick, as thou think'st I am,
But an attorney from the court of hell;
That thus have hous'd my spirit in his form,
To do a message to thee from the king.
The mighty King of England dotes on thee:
He that hath power to take away thy life
Hath power to take thine honour; then consent
To pawn thine honour, rather than thy life:
Honour is often lost and got again;
But life, once gone, hath no recovery,
The sun, that withers hay, doth nourish grass;
The king that would distain thee will advance thee.

The poets write that great Achilles' spear
Could heal the wound it made; the moral is,
What mighty men misdo, they can amend.
The lion doth become his bloody jaws
And grace his foragement, by being mild
When vassal fear lies trembling at his feet.
The king will in his glory hide thy shame;
And those that gaze on him to find out thee
Will lose their eyesight, looking in the sun.
What can one drop of poison harm the sea,
Whose hugy vastures can digest the ill
And make it lose his operation?
The king's great name will temper thy misdeeds,
And give the bitter potion of reproach
A sugar'd-sweet and most delicious taste:
Besides, it is no harm, to do the thing
Which without shame could not be left undone.
Thus have I, in his majesty's behalf,
Apparell'd sin in virtuous sentences,
And dwell upon thy answer in his suit.

COUNT.

Unnatural besiege! Woe me unhappy,
To have escap'd the danger of my foes
And to be ten times worse envir'd by friends!
Hath he no means to stain my honest blood,
But to corrupt the author of my blood
To be his scandalous and vile solicitor?
No marvel, though the branches be then infected,
When poison hath encompass'd the root:
Why then, give sin a passport to offend,
And youth the dangerous rein of liberty:

Blot out the strict forbidding of the law;
And cancel every canon, that prescribes
A shame for shame, or penance for offence.
No, let me die, if his too boist'rous will
Will have it so, before I will consent
To be an actor in his graceless lust.

WAR.

Why, now thou speak'st as I would have thee speak:
And mark how I unsay my words again.
An honourable grave is more esteem'd
Than the polluted closet of a king:
The greater man, the greater is the thing,
Be it good or bad, that he shall undertake:
An unrequited mote, flying in the sun,
Presents a greater substance than it is:
The freshest summer's day doth soonest taint
The loathed carrion that it seems to kiss:
Deep are the blows made with a mighty axe:
The sin doth ten times aggravate itself,
That is committed in a holy place:
An evil deed, done by authority,
Is sin and subornation: deck an ape
In tissue, and the beauty of the robe
Adds but the greater scorn unto the beast.
A spacious field of reasons could I urge
Between his glory, daughter, and thy shame:
That poison shows worst in a golden cup;
Dark night seems darker by the lightning-flash;
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds;
And every glory that inclines to sin,
The shame is treble by the opposite.

So leave I, with my blessings in thy bosom;
Which then convert to a most heavy curse,
When thou convert'st from honour's golden name
To the black faction of unblushing shame!

[WARWICK *retires by the terrace.*

COUNT.

I'll follow thee; and, when my mind turns so,
My body sink my soul in endless woe! [Retires.

A trumpet sounds, DERBY with attendants cross from the castle to the right of the stage; then AUDLEY enters attended.

AUD.

What news, my Lord of Derby, from the emperor?

DER.

As good as we desire: the emperor
Hath yielded to his highness friendly aid;
And makes our king lieutenant-general
In all his lands and large dominions:
Then *via* for the spacious bounds of France!

AUD.

What, doth his highness leap to hear these news?

DER.

I have not yet found time to open them;
The king is in his closet, malcontent,
For what I know not, but he gave in charge,
Till after dinner, none should interrupt him:
The Countess Salisbury, and her father Warwick,
Artois, and all, look underneath the brows.

AUD.

Undoubtedly then something is amiss.
Here comes his highness.

Re-enter KING EDWARD.

DER.

Befall my sovereign all my sovereign's wish!

K. ED.

Ah, that thou wert a witch, to make it so!

DER.

The emperor greeteth you: [*Presenting letters.*]

K. ED.

Would it were the countess!

DER.

And hath accorded to your highness' suit—

K. ED.

Thou liest, she hath not; but I would, she had!

AUD.

All love and duty to my lord the king!

K. ED.

Well, all but one is none:—what news with you?

AUD.

I have, my liege, levied those horse and foot,
According to your charge, and brought them hither.

K. ED.

Then let those foot trudge hence upon those horse,
According to our discharge, and be gone.—

Derby,

I'll look upon the countess' mind anon.

DER.

The countess' mind, my liege?

K. ED.

I mean the emperor: leave me alone.

AUD.

What's in his mind?

DER.

Let's leave him to his humour.

[DERBY and AUDLEY retire.]

K. ED.

Thus from the heart's abundance speaks the tongue;

Countess for emperor: and, indeed, why not?

She is as imperator over me;

And I to her

Am as a kneeling vassal that observes

The pleasure or displeasure of her eye.—

LÖDWICK comes from the terrace.

What says the more than Cleopatra's match

To Caesar now?

LÖD.

That yet, my liege, ere night,

She will resolve your majesty.

[A drum and march are heard in the distance.]

K. ED.

What drum is this, that thunders forth this march,

To start the tender Cupid in my bosom?

Poor sheep-skin, how it brawls with him that beateth it!

Go, break the thund'ring parchment-bottom out,

And I will teach it to conduct sweet lines

Unto the bosom of a heavenly nymph:

For I will use it as my writing-paper;
And so reduce him, from a scolding drum,
To be the herald and dear counsel-bearer
Betwixt a goddess and a mighty king.
Go, bid the drummer learn to touch the lute,
Or hang him in the braces of his drum;
For now we think it an uncivil thing,
To trouble heaven with such harsh resounds:
Away. — [*Lodwick retires to the right of the stage.*
The quarrel, that I have, requires no arms
But these of mine; and these shall meet my foe
In a deep march of penetrable groans:
My eyes shall be my arrows; and my sighs
Shall serve me as the vantage of the wind,
To whirl away my sweet'st artillery:
Ah but, alas, she wins the sun of me,
For that is she herself; and thence it comes
That poets term the wanton warrior blind;
But love hath eyes as judgment to his steps,
Till too-much-loved glory dazzles them. —

Lodwick returns; the drum and march nearer.
How now?

Lod.

My liege, the drum that struck the lusty march
Stands with Prince Edward, your thrice-valiant son.

*A flourish and then enter on the right PRINCE EDWARD,
who is received by DERBY and AUDLEY: soft music is
again heard from the apartments.*

K. Ed.

I see the boy. O, how his mother's face,

Modell'd in his, corrects my stray'd desire
And rates my heart and chides my thievish eye;
Who being rich enough in seeing her,
Yet seeks elsewhere: and basest theft is that
Which cannot cloak itself on poverty.—
Now, boy, what news?

PR. ED. [*kneels*]

I have assembled, my dear lord and father,
The choicest buds of all our English blood
For our affairs to France: and here we come,
To take directions from your majesty.

K. ED.

Still do I see in him delineate
His mother's visage; those his eyes are hers,
Who looking wistly on me make me blush;
For faults against themselves give evidence:
Lust is a fire; and men, like lanthorns, show
Light lust within themselves, even through themselves.
Away, loose silks of wavering vanity!
Shall the large limit of fair Brittany
By me be overthrown? and shall I not
Master this little mansion of myself?
Give me an armour of eternal steel;
I go to conquer kings; and shall I then
Subdue myself and be my enemy's friend?
It must not be.—Come, boy, forward, advance!
Let's with our colours sweet the air of France.

Drum and trumpet heard in the distance; LODWICK advances from the terrace.

Lod.

My liege, the countess with a smiling cheer
Desires access unto your majesty.

K. Ed.

Why, there it goes! that very smile of hers
Hath ransom'd captive France, and set the king,
The dauphin, and the peers, at liberty.—
Go, leave me, Ned, and revel with thy friends.

[*The PRINCE retires.*]

Thy mother is but black; and thou, like her,
Dost put into my mind how foul she is.—
Go, fetch the countess hither in thy hand
And let her chase away those winter clouds;
For she gives beauty both to heaven and earth.

[*Lodwick retires.*]

The sin is more to hack and hew poor men,
Than to embrace in an unlawful way.
The register of all true rarities
Since leathern Adam till this youngest hour.

The COUNTESS advances.

Now, my soul's playfellow! art thou come,
To speak the more than heavenly word of *yea*
To my objection in thy beauteous love? [*Music ceases.*]

COUNT.

My father on his blessing hath commanded—

K. Ed.

That thou shalt yield to me.

COUNT.

Ay, dear my liege, your due.

K. ED.

And that, my dearest love, can be no less
Than right for right and tender love for love.

COUNT.

Than wrong for wrong and endless hate for hate,
But,—sith I see your majesty so bent,
That my unwillingness, my husband's love,
Your high estate, nor no respect respected
Can be my help, but that your mightiness
Will overbear and awe these dear regards,—
I bind my discontent to my content,
And, what I would not, I'll compel I will;
Provided that yourself remove those lets
That stand between your highness' love and mine.

K. ED.

Name them, fair countess, and by heaven, I will.

COUNT.

It is their lives that stand between our love,
That I would have chok'd up, my sovereign.

K. ED.

Whose lives, my lady?

COUNT.

My thrice-loving liege,
Your queen, and Salisbury my wedded husband;
Who living have that title in our love
That we cannot bestow but by their death.

K. ED.

Thy opposition is beyond our law.

COUNT.

So is your desire: if the law
Can hinder you to execute the one,
Let it forbid you to attempt the other:
I cannot think you love me as you say
Unless you do make good what you have sworn.

K. ED.

No more; thy husband and the queen shall die.
Fairer thou art by far than Hero was;
Beardless Leander not so strong as I:
He swum an easy current for his love;
But I will through a Hellespont of blood
To arrive at Sestos where my Hero lies.

COUNT.

Nay, you'll do more; you'll make the river, too,
With their heart-bloods that keep our love asunder,
Of which my husband and your wife are twain.

K. ED.

Thy beauty makes them guilty of their death
And gives in evidence that they shall die;
Upon which verdict, I, their judge, condemn them.

COUNT.

O perjur'd beauty! more corrupted judge!
When to the great star-chamber o'er our heads
The universal sessions calls to count
This packing evil, we both shall tremble for it.

K. ED.

What says my fair love? is she resolute?

COUNT.

Resolv'd to be dissolv'd; and, therefore, this,—
Keep but thy word, great king, and I am thine.
Stand where thou dost, I'll part a little from thee,
And see how I will yield me to thy hands.

*[Turning suddenly upon him,
and showing two daggers.]*

Here by my side doth hang my wedding knives:
Take thou the one and with it kill thy queen
And learn by me to find her where she lies;
And with this other I'll despatch my love,
Which now lies fast asleep within my heart:
When they are gone, then I'll consent to love.
Stir not, lascivious king, to hinder me;
My resolution is more nimbler far
Than thy prevention can be in my rescue,
And, if thou stir, I strike: therefore stand still,
And hear the choice that I will put thee to:
Either swear to leave thy most unholy suit,
And never henceforth to solicit me;
Or else, by Heaven, [*kneeling*] this sharp-pointed knife
Shall stain thy earth with that which thou wouldst stain,
My poor chaste blood. Swear, Edward, swear,
Or I will strike, and die before thee here.

K. ED.

Even by that Power I swear, that gives me now
The power to be ashamed of myself,
I never mean to part my lips again
In any words that tends to such a suit.
Arise, true English lady, whom our isle
May better boast of, than e'er Roman might

Of her, whose ransack'd treasury hath task'd
The vain endeavour of so many pens:
Arise; and be my fault thy honour's fame,
Which after-ages shall enrich thee with.
I am awakèd from this idle dream:—

[Drum and trumpet are heard in the distance.]

Warwick, my son, Derby, Artois, and Audley,
Brave warriors all, where are you all this while?

The PRINCE and LORDS advance; the stage fills with soldiers.

Warwick, I make thee Warden of the North:—
Thou, Prince of Wales, and Audley, straight to sea;
Scour to Newhaven; some there stay for me:—
Myself, Artois, and Derby, will through Flanders
To greet our friends there and to crave their aid;
This night will scarce suffice me to discover
My folly's siege against a faithful lover;
For, ere the sun shall gild the eastern sky,
We'll wake him with our martial harmony.

There is flourish, and then the drums play a march; the COUNTESS kneels and kisses the KING's hand with marked reverence; he then goes out on the right with the PRINCE and LORDS, followed by the attendants and soldiers. The COUNTESS is seen again standing alone on the terrace looking towards the plain; the stage is nearly dark.

CURTAIN

APPENDIX

IT may be interesting to note some of the passages in *Love's Constaney* which recall, either by phrase or thought, similar lines in Shakespeare's plays.

The effects of the chilling blasts of spring is noticed more than once by Shakespeare:

*Whose beauty tyrant's fear,
As a may-blossom with pernicious winds
Hath sully'd, wither'd, overcast, and done.*

EDWARD III, I, ii

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May.

SONNET 18

*Let not thy presence, like the April sun,
Flatter our earth, and suddenly be done.*

EDWARD III, I, ii

*Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye.*

SONNET 33

In the following lines "cost" is used in the sense of costume, and is made to rhyme with "boast."

*And where the upper turf of earth doth boast
His pied perfumes, and party-colour'd cost.*

EDWARD III, I, ii

*Thy love is better than high birth to me,
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,
Of more delight than hanks or horses be;
And having thee of all men's pride I boast.*

SONNET 91

There are three references to Julius Cæsar in the Episode. Shakespeare's admiration for the Roman Conqueror has been often noticed.

*When she would talk of peace, methinks, her tongue
Commanded war to prison; when of war,
It waken'd Cæsar from his Roman grave
To hear war beautify'd by her discourse.*

EDWARD III, II, i

*List his discourse of war, and you shall hear
A fearful battle render'd you in music.*

HENRY V, I, i

Both the following passages are probably a reminiscence of Marlowe's *Tamburlane*:

*That it may raise drops in a Tartar's eye,
And make a flint-heart Scythian pitiful.*

EDWARD III, II, i

*From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint,
From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never trained
To offices of gentle courtesy.*

MERCHANT OF VENICE, IV, i

For if the touch of sweet concordant strings

EDWARD III, II, i

*Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering;*

SONNET 8

*The sick man best sets down the pangs of death;
The man that starves, the sweetness of a feast;
The frozen soul, the benefit of fire;
And every grief his happy opposite.*

EDWARD III, II, i

*O, who can hold a fire in his hand
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?
Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite
By bare imagination of a feast?*

RICHARD II, I, iii

That breaks the sacred warrant of an oath.

EDWARD III, II, i

And cracking the strong warrant of an oath.

RICHARD II, IV, i

Well may I tempt myself to wrong myself.

EDWARD III, II, i

ELIZ. *Shall I forget myself to be myself?*

RICH. *Ay, if yourself's remembrance wrong yourself.*

RICHARD III, IV, iv

This simile is quite in Marlowe's style:

*The poets write, that great Achilles' spear
Could heal the wound it made.*

EDWARD III, II, i

*Whose smile and frown, like to Achilles' spear
Is able with the change to kill and cure.*

2 HENRY VI, v, i

*The freshest summer's day doth soonest taint
The loathed carrion that it seems to kiss.*

EDWARD III, II, i

*For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing
carrion.*

HAMLET, II, ii

Mr. Tyler observes that the first line in the following passage from the Sonnets is somewhat forced, as if to bring in a rhyme to the second line. He thinks it probable that the second passage is quoted from the previous one. Also that the expression "scarlet ornaments" occurs only in the Sonnets.

Lilies that fester, smell far worse than weeds.

EDWARD III, II, i

For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds ;

Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

SONNET 94

• •

For sin, though sin, would not be so esteem'd ;

But, rather, virtue sin, sin virtue deem'd.

EDWARD III, II, i

And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,

And simple truth miscall'd simplicity.

SONNET 66

• •

Anon, with reverent fear when she grew pale,

His cheeks put on their scarlet ornaments.

EDWARD III, II, i

Those lips of thine

That have profan'd their scarlet ornaments

And seal'd false bonds of love as oft as mine.

SONNET 142

• •

For faults against themselves give evidence.

EDWARD III, II, ii

*We ourselves compell'd
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults
To give in evidence.*

HAMLET, III, iii

The similarity of treatment in the scenes between the King and the Countess and Angelo and Isabella should also be noticed. The following are parallel passages:

*Contemplative desire! desire to be
In contemplation that may master thee!*

EDWARD III, I, ii

*O cunning enemy that, to catch a saint,
With saints dost bait thy hook!*

MEASURE FOR MEASURE, II, ii

∴

*Delve there, and find this issue and their pride
To spring from ordure and corruption's side.*

EDWARD III, I, ii

*Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,
Corrupt with virtuous season.*

MEASURE FOR MEASURE, II, ii

∴

To stamp His image in forbidden metal,

EDWARD III, II, i

*that do coin Heaven's image
In stamps that are forbid.*

MEASURE FOR MEASURE, II, iv



LILIES THAT FESTER
AND
LOVE'S CONSTANCY
